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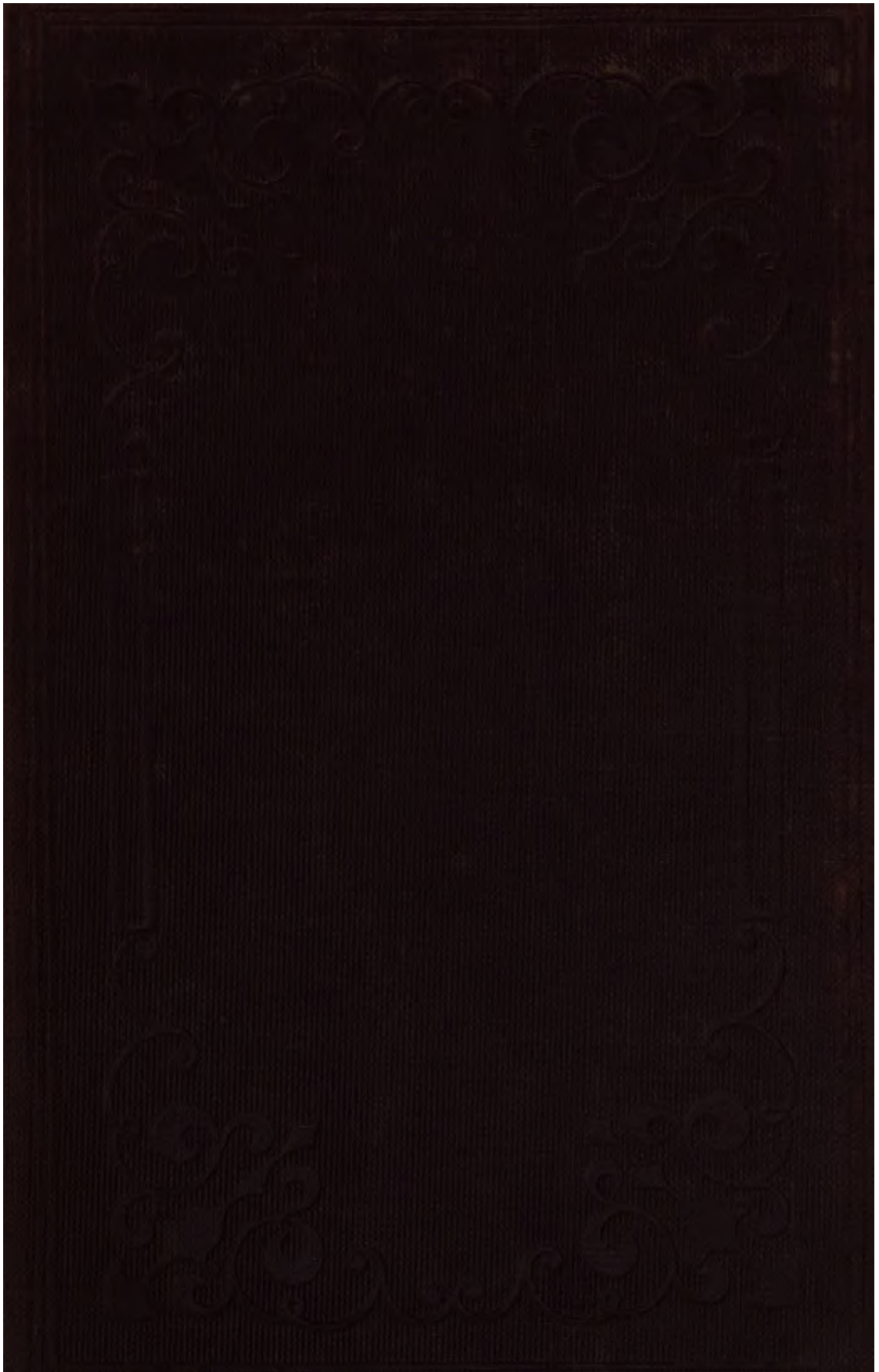
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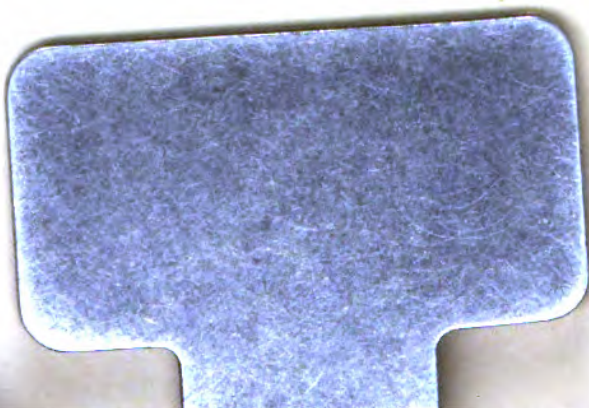
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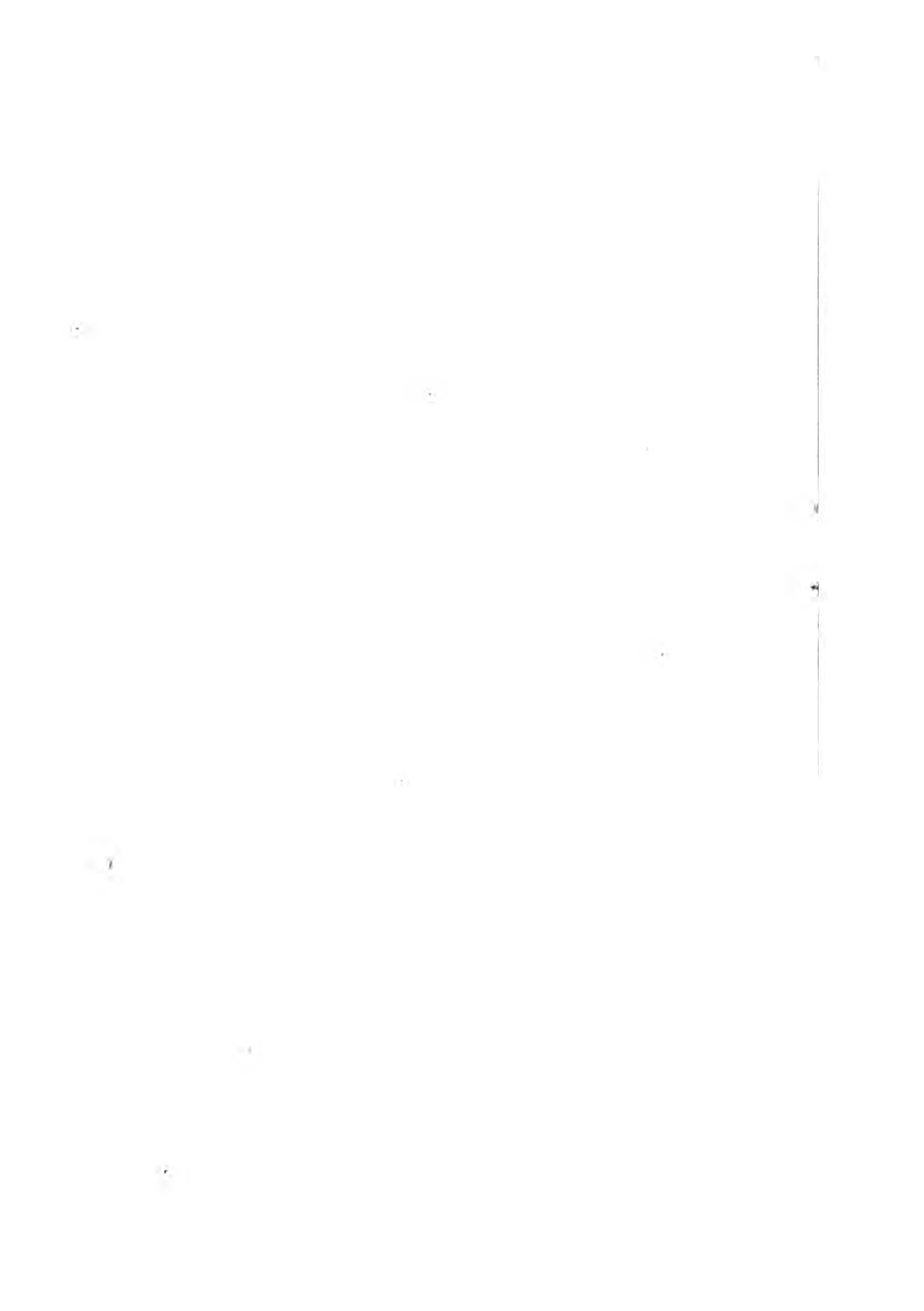


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THE
PASTOR'S GIFT;

OR,

A Manual of Pastoral Instruction.

IN LETTERS,

FROM A PASTOR TO HIS FLOCK.

BY

ALEXANDER GORDON, M.A.

LONDON:

JOHN SNOW, 35, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1848.

ERRATA.

- Page 7, six lines from bottom, omit the word *and* before tends.
,, 17, second line from top, read *of* his good pleasure.
,, 71, fourth line from top, read sanctuary *of* the Lord.
,, 72, second line, read as *far* as.
,, 104, sixth line from top, for *pacific-like* read *Pacific*.



P R E F A C E .

THE writer of the following little work, has had in view mainly, in its composition, the spiritual benefit of the flock over which he has been made an overseer. Believing a Christian minister, in duty bound to lay every possible appliance under contribution for the edification of those committed to his care, and regarding the press as one of those instrumentalities, which may be employed with happy effect in connexion with the pulpit—an opinion he has indeed expressed in the body of his work—he had for some time cherished the conception of a small manual of pastoral instruction, as likely to awaken deeper interest among those under his own ministry, than the productions of any other writer, however valuable, and also as a means of preserving for their benefit, in a more permanent form, some fragments of his public teaching.

But, as the topics handled in the following pastoral letters are of vast and universal concernment, the author cannot but cherish the hope, that in their publication, he is doing his Master's work ; that his

little book may be useful to precious souls, where his voice can never be heard, and be instrumental, under God, in advancing the cause of Christ, when he shall have been called to give in his account. May the best wishes of his heart be realized !

The form of Letters has been chosen, as thereby affording a directness of address and familiar mode of instruction, which could not have been so easily adopted in any other style of composition. Besides, such a style, is in harmony with Apostolic precedent, a large proportion of the writings of the New Testament Scriptures, being in the shape of Letters.

Now, may God of his infinite mercy, countenance this humble effort to promote the spiritual good of his people. His blessing can make the following pages answer the end contemplated by the writer, whatever defects arising from the imperfection of all human instrumentality may attach to them. May this be abundantly bestowed ! Amen.

A. G.

WALSALL, DEC. 25th, 1847.

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THE CHRISTIAN PASTOR'S GIFT,

ETC.

LETTER I.

ON CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

You will readily allow that, of all possessions, that of truth is the most valuable. "The merchandise of it" (if I may so speak) "is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold." Truth, how precious, under any of its forms! Ask the man of science the worth of scientific truth, and he tells you at once, that he deems it so valuable, that he considers no sacrifice too great, in order to its acquisition. The philosopher, whether exploring the arcana of physical nature, or investigating the phenomena of mind, will even joyously submit to spend years of patient research, wasting the midnight oil in anxious and continuous thought:—sparing no pains, no expense, no exertion, provided he has only the prospect of terminating his efforts in some invention or useful discovery.

But the value of every other form of truth is as the "small dust of the balance" when compared to that of religious truth. Upon this turn the destinies of the human spirit. The salvation of the soul,

and "the truth as it is in Jesus" are closely and necessarily connected. Error in the spiritual economy is like poison in the natural; noxious, destructive, and deadly. The instrument employed by God in the sanctification of his people, in making them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, in purifying their hearts by faith, and fitting them for the enjoyment of himself, is none other than the truth.

The importance of divine truth cannot therefore possibly be over-rated. To know it, is essential to Christian character. The eyes of every child of God have been enlightened by it, his heart opened to feel its power, and his will disposed to submit to its authority. The profession of Christianity without such knowledge is a delusion, an image without life, a form without the substance. Divine knowledge is the very soil in which the principles of grace germinate, spring up, acquire strength, grow, and bring forth their precious fruits. This, in a word, lies at the foundation of every Christian grace.

In considering this subject, we are naturally led to contemplate its source. This, as all enlightened Protestants will readily allow, must be the Word of God, as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. Valuable as the works of nature unquestionably are, as means of instruction, it is yet abundantly plain that our moral inaptitude to learn is such, that we should know but little of those things which are "unseen and eternal" but for the valuable information supplied by the lively oracles.

"How precious is the Book Divine,
By inspiration given,
Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine,
To guide our souls to Heaven."

Woe unto those who, in the pride of their own self-

sufficiency, would take away the key of knowledge, and seal up the cisterns of heavenly wisdom! Such a principle deserves to be reprobated in the strongest terms.

Read, dear friends, and study the Word of God, that ye may grow in knowledge. "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby." What rich variety is provided in the sacred volume for our mental enjoyment and spiritual improvement! The history of God's providential dispensations towards his ancient people, as recorded in Sacred Writ, how divinely adapted to inspire us with confidence in his power and goodness! To the pious soul a most edifying and refreshing record of Christian experience presents itself in the circumstances of sacred biography. What emotions of gratitude, and faith, and love, do we behold gushing fresh from the sanctified heart, and pouring themselves forth in the melody of inspired song! And oh, how delightful to drink into the spirit of these sacred effusions! Our own state by nature; the way of acceptance with God; the nature of true blessedness; and other kindred topics of deep interest, are all developed in the sacred volume in characters of holy and heavenly light. The person, the work, and glory of Christ, all afford a theme of delightful and instructive meditation. Would we, then, wish to grow in Divine knowledge, we must make the Word of God the man of our counsel, we must explore its pages with ceaseless care; we must make it our daily study.

It must never be forgotten that an enlarged acquaintance with the mind of the Spirit, as revealed in the sacred volume, is inseparably associated with a particular frame of mind. *A mingled feeling of deep reverence and humility* ought ever to pervade

our minds in perusing the Scriptures of truth. We must sink every high thought of self, every undue estimate of our own attainments, in profound reverence for the authority of Him who speaks in the written Word. The Bible is not like any book of human composition. It is a Divine revelation : God is its author : holy men of God, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. With as much solemn awe ought we, therefore, to receive the words of inspiration, as if we heard the announcements of Holy Writ authoritatively uttered by a voice from Heaven. The God who spoke amid the thunders, the lightnings, and clouds of Sinai, speaks with no less authority in the inspired records. This awful Being will never condescend to unlock the treasures of wisdom and knowledge to the vain and wanton gaze of a flippant curiosity. We must, moreover, approach the sacred oracles in a *teachable frame of spirit*. The great barrier to the acquisition of knowledge is a conceit of knowledge. Many go to the Bible with all their prejudices and opinions, not to obtain new light, but to obtain something to confirm their steps in their old paths. Having already embraced a set of opinions by which they are resolved at all hazards to abide, they set themselves down to carve out the intimations of Scripture so as to make them square with their preconceived dogmas. No wonder that such should be ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Further : the Word of God must be *studied*, or read in a meditative frame, in order to our possessing correct and enlarged views of its sacred contents. A fitful and rambling mode of perusing the sacred page will never enrich our souls with the treasures of Divine knowledge. We must think much on what we read,

if we would profit thereby. We must *feed* upon the truth. By this means a process of spiritual digestion goes on, by which Divine truth is turned into the aliment and life-blood of "the inner man." "Oh, how love I thy law," says David; "it is my meditation all the day." Again, "I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation; mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I might meditate in thy Word." The reason why the views of many are so narrow and one-sided, is clearly to be traced to the mode in which they read the sacred oracles. Without a due comparison of doctrine with doctrine, precept with precept; without a careful examination of the connexion and the design, calm consideration, and after-thought, no man can become "mighty in the Scriptures."

In connexion, moreover, with a proper frame of spirit, we must use *all diligence* in our search after Divine knowledge. What is accounted valuable in worldly matters can be obtained only as the reward of persevering industry. So also in regard to high attainments in Divine knowledge. The hand of the diligent maketh rich. No pains, therefore, ought to be spared, in order to the enlargement of our views of the ways and counsels of God. One fresh thought, be it remembered, from the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in the Divine word, is more than sufficient to repay the labour of years of the most industrious research.

Be industrious, then, in your inquiries after truth. Beware of frittering away the time in frivolous pursuits, which might be thus employed. Every moment is precious, and ought to be regarded as so. Some adopt the method of selecting, daily, some portion of sacred Scripture as the subject of medita-

tion, during their spare moments ; and certainly it is well to have, at all times, some definite subject before the mind's eye, lest on any occasion our thoughts should be allowed to run to waste.

All *proper helps* ought to be used for the correction and enlargement of our views of Divine truth. Critical and explanatory works on the books of Scripture may be consulted with profit, and the writings of holy men on questions of doctrinal and polemical theology ought not to be overlooked. Particularly would I recommend the perusal of works on the history, geography, and antiquities of sacred Scripture. These are peculiarly valuable in throwing light on the evidences of Christianity, the fulfilment of prophecy, and on many passages of Holy Writ, which to us, living in a modern age, and under the influence of customs widely different from those obtaining in the East, appear, at first sight, obscure and difficult. An acquaintance with church history tends greatly to elucidate the dispensations of Divine Providence, and enlarge our conceptions of the goodness of the Church's Head. The writings of eminent divines on different parts of the system of revealed religion tend to correct our views, and improve our hearts. They ought not to be neglected. Without naming particular authors, I would strongly recommend a class of writers, which the Christian, who would possess comprehensive views of Divine truth, will do well to peruse to some extent ; I mean the writings of our Reformers and Puritan divines. There is an unction, and a spirituality about the writings of such men as Latimer, Owen, Baxter, Howe, Goodwin, Flavel, Bunyan, and others of the same school, which we rarely find in modern productions.

A knowledge of general history, as well as that of Church history, serves often to illustrate the ways of Providence, and thereby add to our stock of Christian knowledge. This source of improvement also must not be neglected by those who aim at the character of well-informed Christians.

Much also may be learned from a contemplation of the works of God. The book of nature, as well as that of revelation, is a valuable teacher. Cold and insensible must his heart be, who can gaze on the sublime phenomena of nature, and not be affected: and dull must his apprehensive faculties be, who can learn nothing from a consideration of the wonderful works of the Most High. "One generation," says David, "shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts." The broad blue ocean, the lightning of the cloud, the voice of the thunder, the stormy wind, the devastating hurricane, all bespeak His majesty and power; while in the refreshing dew-drops of the early morn, the buds of spring, the opening flower, the fields rejoicing in the abundance of the ripening harvest, the cattle browsing on the verdant lawn, we have no less instructive lessons of His wisdom and goodness. The study of the works of nature through the aids afforded by modern science, and a slight knowledge of chemistry and natural philosophy, will enable one to avail himself of such advantages, and tends greatly to enlarge our views of the wisdom, goodness, and glory of their Author. It is really a shame for Christians in the present day to be entirely ignorant on such subjects, when the means of knowledge are so easily accessible.

Finally, dear friends, let all your efforts for the

acquisition of Christian knowledge be conducted in the spirit of prayer, and with prayer. Whatever knowledge you acquire without this, will serve only to puff up, but will not minister to godly edifying. It is the blessing of God that "maketh rich,"—rich in spiritual and divine knowledge, rich in every grace that adorns the Christian character; and this blessing is obtained in answer to prayer.

From what has been said, you perceive, dear friends, the vast importance of Christian knowledge. Into a consideration of all its advantages I cannot at present enter. Suffice it to notice a few of the more prominent.

Christian knowledge serves to check and save from a censorious and pragmatistical spirit. Persons of little information are generally apt to be censorious. Ignorant professors are often exceedingly troublesome to Christian ministers. Accustomed to a narrow circle of ideas, they can hardly be forced out of the beaten track, and are frequently disposed to charge their instructors with failing to preach the gospel, when they have been striving to set before the people the whole counsel of God, and have had occasion to illustrate the truth from those resources of which a well-informed mind can avail itself. Such persons would have taken huge offence at the Apostle Paul, when he happened to quote Aratus, and Epimenides, two heathen poets, and drew some of his most happy illustrations of the Christian course from the exercises practised in the Grecian games. My Christian friends, be not ye like unto such. "In understanding be ye men." Cultivate the means of acquiring extensive general information. Thus you will grow in comprehension and vigour of mind, be able to relish

“strong meat,” and be preserved from that spirit of narrow-minded censoriousness, which little information is apt to produce.

Another advantage of Christian knowledge is, that it affords the materials of profitable thought. The mind is a thinking principle, and requires a constant supply of such materials, otherwise its powers must run to waste, and worse than waste. The world, its vanities, a thousand fantastic scenes, and perhaps impure conceptions, will be sure to take possession of the soul. A vacant mind is just what the devil seeks, and he will not fail to fill it with occupants. But Divine knowledge is the door-keeper of the human heart, and protects it from the intrusion of those sinful lusts and passions, which struggle for admittance. It expands, exalts, and invigorates the understanding; it enlarges, and purifies the heart. The knowledge of Divine truth will appear moreover of signal importance, if we consider its confirming power—its influence as a safeguard against the insidious approaches of error. There have been men in all ages, who, by “sleight and cunning craftiness lie in wait to deceive.” Now the grand protection against their devices is the truth. Fortified by an enlarged acquaintance with the pure doctrines of Christianity, the people of God are alike safe from the sophisms of infidelity, the activity of Rome, and the scarcely less dangerous guides, who instead of conducting the simple-hearted believer to the fountains of truth, to slake his mental thirst at those springs of life-giving water which God’s word supplies, employ the most direct means to submerge their followers, to the ruin of their precious souls in the muddy pools of tradition and ecclesiastical antiquity.

Whilst religious knowledge establishes in the belief of the truth, it is the grand antidote against bigotry. Bigotry, like some noxious animals, can live in the darkness only. It nestles in ignorance, and hatches its pestiferous eggs in that sombre element. Light it cannot endure, for light begets charity; and bigotry speedily sickens and dies under the benignant radiance of the sun of love. Show me a bigoted man, and I shall not wait to suppose, but venture to affirm, he is an ignorant man. Dear friends, that you may be no bigots, I am anxious you should possess enlightened and enlarged views of the truth, being persuaded that this must ever prove the grand protection against the virus of bigotry. Bigotry is the attribute of little souls; the concomitant of narrow minds: lives in the frigid zone of Christianity, and shuns the region of heavenly light. Let us, therefore, strive to erect our tabernacle where this light shines, and we shall be safe from the intrusion of this ungenerous visitant.

As Christians, we would all wish to be useful in the world. Another great advantage of enlarged Divine knowledge is, that it greatly augments our power of usefulness. It adds immensely to weight of character. Knowledge is power in the moral as well as in the physical sense. Archimedes, it is said, boasted, that had he only a fulcrum on which to place his engines he could move the world. The Christian has got a fulcrum in the truth of God, on which placing the lever of Christian effort, he can move the world of minds. How great this power! Let Christians, therefore, be careful to avail themselves of every means which may add to their moral influence—their power of doing good—more especially to the souls of men.

Lastly, enlarged Christian knowledge tends to confirm our confidence in the wisdom of God's moral administration. Recollecting how often he has brought light out of darkness, order out of confusion; how frequently he has made the wrath of man to praise him, we are enabled to say, in the midst of the darkest dispensations, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." We remember what God hath wrought, and are encouraged.

Weigh these considerations, beloved friends, and may God bless you; and that "ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye may walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power," is the earnest prayer of

Your sincerely attached

FRIEND AND PASTOR.

LETTER II.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF A HIGH STANDARD OF
VITAL AND PRACTICAL GODLINESS.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

WHEN professors of religion begin to be satisfied with their attainments in grace, there is every reason to suspect the commencement of spiritual declension. Self-satisfaction, a disposition to settle down in contentment with what we are, is just one of those devices employed by the devil to ruin precious souls. The Christian's motto should constantly be, "Onward, onward." "Forgetting those things which are behind," says Paul, "and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

It is the duty, as well as the privilege and happiness of Christians, to aim at a high standard of vital godliness. As regards this, the Word of God is very explicit: "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."¹ The duty of entire consecration to God and his service is elsewhere frequently inculcated in Holy Scripture. "Ye are not your

¹ Rom. xii. 1

own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore, glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are God's."¹ The argument for the enforcement of the duty of cultivating a spirit of eminent holiness is pressed on the attention of believers by God himself, drawn from his own nature. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." The perfection of Christian character consists in being like God, as his character stands developed in Christ, who is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." For this purpose let us look unto Jesus—look to his perfect example—that sublime picture of meekness, humility, condescension, charity, and all other graces, as the pattern for our imitation; and, beholding the glory of the Lord as in a glass, we shall be changed into the same image from glory unto glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The primitive Christians were greatly distinguished by their simple-hearted, deep piety. This was the prime feature in their characters. The very name they frequently bear in the inspired writings is strongly indicative of it—"Saints and faithful brethren." How many in our day pass for Christians, who would nevertheless consider themselves insulted were we to call them by the name of saints, and yet this was one principal designation of primitive believers.

It ought, dear friends, never to be forgotten, that the *ultimate end of the mission of Christ to earth*, was none other than the restoration of man to holiness, the destruction of sin, and the re-formation of the character in its pristine purity. God created man in his own image—"knowledge, righteousness, and

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

true holiness ;” but the moral beauty of this image was marred, and its main features sadly obliterated by the introduction of sin into the world by the fall. The leading principle, therefore, in the natural mind is “enmity to God.” Man cannot consequently, in a natural state, be the object of divine complacency. He must first be changed, “created anew in Christ Jesus”—“born again,” and made a child of God, by assimilation to his moral image. To this end the Son of God appeared upon earth, made an atonement for sin to divine justice, left us an example that we should follow his steps, and thus opened up a way whereby sinful men, being “washed and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God,” might become the objects of divine favour and delight. Let this consideration, dear friends, have its due weight on your entire deportment.

It should moreover be remembered, that *our own spiritual comfort* depends materially on the depth and consistency of our piety. The great drawback on the peace and enjoyment of the life of God in the soul, will be found in our spiritual falls, shortcomings in duty, departures from God, conformity to the world, arising from the remnants of sin dwelling in our members—in a word, whatever attaches to our characters that is “of the earth, earthy.” Look at the state of David’s mind after his fall; how deep his penitence, how poignant his godly sorrow. Look at the state of Peter’s feelings after he had denied his Lord; he went forth and wept bitterly. So also, will the neglect of duty prove destructive to our spiritual peace. A professor of religion was in the habit of waiting on a Christian minister with a string of dolorous com-

plaints, arising from spiritual darkness and a want of comfort in religion. The minister endeavoured to direct his visitor to the all-sufficiency of the work of Christ, and to the "exceeding great and precious promises" of his word, but all to no effect. The minister began then to bethink himself that neglect of duty must be the cause. "Pray," said he to his dejected visitant, "what portion of Scripture did you read this morning?" This question was followed by a dead pause on the part of the person addressed. "You are able," said he, "surely to recollect the passage." This brought forth an acknowledgment of neglect, accompanied, however, with an excuse arising from want of time, and the pressure of worldly duty. "Have you had your breakfast to-day?" said the minister. This was admitted. "Now," said he, "I see the cause of your want of spiritual comfort. Whilst you have fed your body, you have been starving your soul." Would we, my dear friends, be happy in our religion, we must aim at a high standard of vital piety: would we drink deep into the cup of spiritual enjoyment, we must labour, by the grace of God, to put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on more and more "the new man which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him."¹

Further, we must not forget, that the measure of *our usefulness* in the world, depends very much on the degree of our piety. The most holy men have always been the most useful in their generation. Look into the history of the Church of God, from the earliest ages to the present time, and you

¹ Coloss. iii. 10.

will find it abundantly confirmed :—that those who have been most honoured of God to benefit their fellow-men, and promote his cause, have been invariably men of eminent piety. Cyprian, and Augustine, and Ambrose, and the more eminent of the Fathers ; Luther, and Calvin, and other illustrious names, among the Reformers ; Howe, and Baxter, and Owen, and other burning and shining lights, among the nonconformists ; Watts and Doddridge, and Wesley, and Whitfield, and other eminently useful men, in modern times, were all men of eminent piety. But we need not go to the more distinguished characters in church history for illustrations of our position, for many present themselves in the less conspicuous walks of Christian usefulness. 'The most devoted and pious Sunday-school teachers, tract distributors, visitors of the sick, have always been the most successful in their several departments of labour. Those, therefore, who would wish to be honoured in promoting the cause of God in the world, who would seek to be eminently useful in winning souls to Christ, (and who among us would not covet the high distinction) must aspire after high attainments in holiness both in heart and life.

Beware then, beloved friends, of resting in your religious attainments. Do not look upon yourselves "as though you had already attained, either were already perfect." Such feeling will be sure to stint your growth in grace. It is the product of spiritual pride, and offensive to Christ.

But perhaps you ask :—How shall we make that progress in spiritual matters so desirable ? I answer, use the means of divine appointment. God works invariably both in the natural and moral world

by means; and in the hearts of believers he works by means both "to will and to do his good pleasure."

First of all, let me exhort you to employ every effort in dependence on divine aid for *the keeping of the heart*. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of the heart are the issues of life." The discipline of the heart forms the grand business of religion. Watch over the desires, thoughts, imaginations, of your hearts; and looking up for all-sufficient grace, check every unholy emotion, and crucify every impure desire. Enter the "chambers of imagery," and thrust out every worldly lust, and on the portals thereof, write "Holiness unto the Lord."

Be much in your closets. The secret of your spiritual strength lies in private prayer. All the energies of the "inner man" are invigorated in the exercise of private devotion. Piety renews its strength, acquires fresh life, and waxes strong in the atmosphere of the closet. Brethren, I implore you, as you value your spiritual health, and wish to prosper in the divine life, that you neglect not this duty.

Further, let me press on your attention the importance of *meditation*. David represents the happy man as he who "meditates on the law of the Lord day and night." Make the word of God your habitual companion. Seek your spiritual nourishment in its sacred pages. On these points I merely touch, having had occasion to notice them more fully in my former letter.

Wait upon God in *the ordinances of public worship*. The man who habitually neglects any part of public worship must be all his life through a dwarf in spiritual attainments. He is like a tree

planted in a barren soil where no water is ; while those planted in the house of God flourish like the palm-tree, his leaf shall wither. Never miss the opportunities, dear friends, of joining in the public song of praise in the courts of your God ; esteem the reading of God's word in the sanctuary as a privilege ; blend your aspirations with those of the people of God as they ascend to his throne in the public prayer ; remember that the preaching of the word is God's institution, for the conversion and edification of souls ; and with these feelings embrace every hallowed season of social worship with grateful delight.

Lastly, *think much of heaven*, its holy and happy fellowship, its pure and everlasting delights. The entire work of grace in the soul here, is a preparative process for the bliss of heaven. Saints, in the use of the means of grace, are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Frequent meditation, therefore, on that happy place, cannot fail to have a purifying effect upon our minds. It will lead us to cultivate and imbibe the spirit of heaven. Gazing on the brightness of the celestial city, our characters will shine in its reflected glory ; we shall long to tread its golden streets ; our aspirations after holiness will grow in vigour and intensity as we contemplate the purity of that region of unsullied bliss, and weigh the truthful and solemn declaration, that nothing can enter therein "that defileth or maketh a lie." And surely the thought, that Christ is there, and that there we shall see him as he is, must have a sanctifying influence upon the heart. Let the Christian turn over in his mind the lines of that beautiful hymn, and say if it has not :

“Jesus, my all, to heaven is gone,
He whom I fix my hopes upon ;
His track I see, and I'll pursue
The narrow way till him I view ;
The way the holy prophets went,
The road that leads from banishment :
The king's highway of holiness
I'll go, for all his paths are peace.”

Christian brethren, aim, in a word, at a high standard of vital and practical piety ; let your light so shine before men, that they may glorify your Father, who is in heaven ; seek to have your conversation in all things becoming the gospel of Christ, as those who have felt its power, and have yielded themselves to its sanctifying influence, and God will amply reward your souls in the blessedness of conformity to His Divine image. “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

YOUR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

LETTER III.

ON CHRISTIAN LOVE.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

It is almost unnecessary for me to attempt a definition of Christian love. Those who have felt its power have a more clear idea of its nature from experience than it would be possible to convey by any formal definition. It is an emotion of complacent delight, a feeling, pleasurable and attractive, excited and maintained by the perception of Christian excellencies. Christian love is the very heart in the mystical body of Christ, whose pulsations diffuse a healthful influence throughout the entire spiritual economy. Love, love divine, the same in kind with the love of Christians one to another, but higher in degree, is the grand moral gravitating power of the universe, that which binds the allegiance of the hierarchy of heaven to the eternal throne, and unites in everlasting harmony the several orders of holy intelligences throughout the vast empire of the Almighty.

The grand characteristic of the people of God should be love — love to God, love to Christ, love to the brethren. Permit me at present to direct your attention to the latter form of this principle. What a delightful aspect the Church of Christ would present were all its members but deeply imbued with the divine principle of brotherly love!

We should have a picture of heaven upon earth, the mountain of the Lord's house would soon be exalted in the top of the mountains ; and such would be its attractive glory, that all people would speedily flow unto it.

“Then should the earth become
One temple for the Lord,
One wide and spacious dome
To magnify his word.”

May the Eternal Spirit, by the power of divine love, so fuse the hearts of professing Christians into happy union, that this consummation so devoutly to be wished for, may be soon realised.

To deepen our impressions of the importance of Christian love, let us look carefully at its blessed influence. Its possessor finds in it a perpetual spring of hallowed enjoyment. It is the joy of the heart, the tranquillizer of the bosom, the feast of the soul. He who lives under its power is like a man walking amid roses in a garden, inhaling perpetual sweetness. It is the sunshine of life, bringing a ray of heavenly light into the troubled heart in every season of perplexity or sorrow.

The influence of Christian love in a Church of Christ's great and most beneficial. It is the prime instrument of peace ; and oh, how desirable is peace among the professed subjects of the Prince of Peace ! How sadly does its contrary disfigure and lacerate their fellowship ! “Pray” says David, “for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee.” And then he breathes forth the language of fervent prayer —“Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.” When love prevailed in the primitive churches, they “had rest, and walking in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, they

were multiplied." How beautifully the happy effects of Christian love are depicted in that¹ portion of sacred Scripture which ought to be engraven with a pen of iron on the heart of every Christian. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not, charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Love teaches Christians to esteem others better than themselves, and thus places them on a position of moral elevation unutterably lovely. True Christian love, as the words of the apostle teach, destroys the meanness of envy, clothes with humility, adorns with genuine politeness, enlarges the heart with true benevolence, subdues irascibility, excludes all jealousies and unworthy suspicions, delightfully anticipates the best, and sorrowfully, not exultingly, looks upon the dark side when compelled so to do by the force of evidence.

One of the most delightful aspects under which the influence of Christian love appears, is that evinced in Christian forbearance: "Charity *suffereth* long, and is kind. Beareth all things." Here the beauty of Christian love shines forth as the sunbeam. There were circumstances in the character of the primitive Christians which called for the exercise of such a duty; so will there be among Christians till the end of time, till they shall be presented faultless before the throne—"a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

Impressed, therefore, with a sense of the value of

¹ 2 Cor. xiii.

Christian love, let us carefully inquire how it may be increased. It was the prayer of the apostle Paul in behalf of the Philippians, whom he commends for their affectionate spirit, "that their love might abound yet more and more in all knowledge and in all judgment." How then may we obtain an increase of this happy feeling?

In order to the promotion of Christian love, our first duty must terminate upon ourselves. *We must endeavour to divest our own characters of every thing unamiable*, every thing tending to interrupt or diminish the complacent regards of our Christian brethren. Every thing that mars the beauty of the Christian life must be laid aside; "all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings." Some complain of a want of love among their brethren, when the fault is manifestly with themselves. A lady was in the habit of complaining to her minister of a want of love among the members of his flock. "Dear madam," said the minister one day, "in order to be loved, you must be lovely." It was a true saying. Would we be loved, dear friends, we must seek to be lovely in our own characters.

Further, in looking at the character of our Christian brethren, *we must be careful not to look too much on the dark side*. We must not forget that excellencies are sometimes combined with great defects, much real worth with much imperfection. We find at times a warm heart in connexion with an irascible spirit; much zeal with no small share of indiscretion; a degree of apparent formality with enlightened views of divine truth, a disposition in some to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, in connexion with much Christian activity. What we know of some brethren, perhaps may have a tendency

to lower them in our estimation ; but let us hope all things, and believe that if we knew them better we should esteem them more highly. With regard to those who have trespassed against us, we must ever exercise an enlarged spirit of Christian charity, and act out the apostolic rule—" Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Intercourse is one grand instrument for the promotion of Christian love. Burning coals, when separated and scattered over any extent of surface, soon expire, but when brought into a heap, they glow and burn with intensity. So it is with regard to Christians. When separated, their love is apt to grow cold and feeble, but when they come much together, it grows in strength and vigour. But intercourse, in order to being influential in this respect, must be Christian. Idle gossip, or as the Apostle terms it, " foolish talking and jestings, which are not convenient," will never further Christian love. Let our conduct in all our intercourse with our brethren, be marked by courtesy, gentleness, delicacy of feeling, would we leave a happy impression on their hearts.

We have many opportunities for the cultivation of Christian intercourse. The prayer-meeting affords a blissful season of hallowed fellowship ; and surely nothing can tend more to bind our hearts together in love, than the fact of our uniting in acknowledging our common sin, and imploring blessings unitedly at the footstool of a throne of grace. Attendance at the week-day evening lecture, presents an opportunity for the cultivation of Christian love, as well as the meeting of brethren in the house of prayer

for public worship on the Lord's Day. The man who fails to improve such opportunities, has no room to complain of a want of love on the part of his fellow professors. The heart panting for the delights of brotherly love, will find no want of opportunities for cultivating the principle in the ordinary walks of social life, and how delightful it is to behold Christians recognising each other, as united by the tenderest and holiest ties; brother grasping the hand of brother; and, on seasonable occasions, talking of the things of God. Thus, heart leaps to heart, sympathies are fused, and an "increase of the body is made, to the edifying of itself in love." Away with the cold formality of conventional etiquette merely, the stiff bow, or bare nod of recognition. Christian love seeks a more warm mode of expression. Be polite, indeed, but be ye also condescending and affectionate.

Would professing Christians strengthen the bonds of Christian love, *they must be careful to maintain a jealous concern for each others reputation.* This is sometimes sadly forgotten. There are even professors of religion who seem to take a kind of malicious pleasure in exposing the infirmities, or oddities of their brethren. How unlike that charity which covereth a multitude of sins, and which ought ever to adorn the character of the professed people of God. True Christian love delights to spread a mantle over the infirmities of brethren. Manifesting such conduct, exemplifying such a spirit, how is it possible for our fellow-disciples, when they come to know it, not to love us. And know it they must, for such conduct cannot be placed under a bushel, but must give forth a light which will not fail to render it abundantly apparent.

Lastly, allow me to remark in general, that Chris-

tian love is greatly promoted by *the manifestation at all times on the part of Christians, of affectionate mutual interest*. On this point I shall have occasion to dwell more fully in a subsequent letter, when I come to speak of Christian sympathy ; in one word, I would say, let the professed followers of Christ take all proper opportunities of *showing* their love to each other, let them adopt every proper mode of *practically* evincing their holy attachment to them who have obtained "like precious faith." "My little children," says the Apostle John : "let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Finally, brethren, let your love be without partiality, and without hypocrisy ; let it resemble that of the primitive disciples :—"love to all the saints."

Beloved friends, let me, in conclusion, beseech you, to ponder well the obligations to the practice of this duty. Remember the dying words of your exalted Lord :—"These things I command you, that ye love one another." How pleasing in his sight, the exhibition of that charity which is the bond of perfectness! Walk in love, even as he also hath loved you, and hath given himself for you an offering and a sacrifice unto God for a sweet-smelling savour. Would you cheer the heart of your pastor, see that ye love one another. Love as children of the same father, pilgrims in the same way, and expectants of the same everlasting home. The dislikes, petty jealousies, variance, divisions, which unhappily occur at times among professors of religion, are wormwood and gall in the cup of pastoral comfort. Do not forget that the eyes of the world are upon you ; and should they discover the absence from your fellowship of the grace of Christian love, they will not only draw an inference

unfavourable to the reality of your religion, but even to the power of Christianity itself. Hold the truth in love, and your characters will command the homage of the world. Then will you, in the language of the poet—

“Force a frowning world to say,
‘See how these Christians love.’”

What a barrier has the want of love among professors of religion, often proved against the progress of the cause of Christ. Not only have prejudices been lodged in the minds of worldly men, but even anxious inquirers, who had begun to inquire the way to the mountain of the Lord, with their faces thitherward, have been repelled by the unhallowed dissensions of the dwellers therein. Strive, my beloved brethren, to exhibit habitually such a spirit, and such conduct as shall render your fellowship attractive; and thus, you will not only “put to silence the ignorance of foolish men,” but be the means, under God, of leading the inquirer into those paths which are pleasantness and peace, conducting to true happiness here, and to glory hereafter.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”

YOUR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

LETTER IV.

ON CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

THE bond of union among the followers of Christ is very close and interesting. They are all members of the same family, pilgrims in the same way, soldiers in the same army, partakers of the same hope. Assuredly, then, a mutual feeling of deep tender sympathy ought to characterise their intercourse. How instructive and striking the illustration of the apostle Paul;¹ in which Christians are represented as members of the same body; and how important that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another; and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

The duty of Christian sympathy holds a conspicuous place in the Word of God. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."² "Finally, be ye all of one mind, *having compassion one of another*; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."³

The nature of this amiable feeling has been illustrated by the example of Christ and his apostles. One reason assigned for his assumption of humanity was,

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 14, 28. ² Rom. xii. 15. ³ 3 Pet. iii. 8.

that he might thereby sympathise with his people. "Verily he took not upon him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining unto God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."¹ Seeing, then, that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."² While on earth, he displayed the tenderest sympathy for his people. When on the memorable occasion of his raising Lazarus from the dead, we are told how he wept, in what an affecting and tender attitude did he appear! Nor does he feel less for his people now that he has gone to glory. His heart is still as full of thrilling tender sympathy.

"Though now ascended up on high,
He bends on earth a brother's eye;
Partaker of the human name,
He knew the frailties of our frame."

In this respect we find the apostles imitating their Divine Master. "Who," says Paul, "is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?"

There is a manifest harmony between the feeling

¹ Heb. xi. 16, 18.

² Heb. iv. 14.

of Christian sympathy and those other feelings which true religion naturally originates and cherishes—love, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, sympathy; these, and others, are the graces which become the character of the followers of Christ, and which we should ever seek to promote. Without any one of these the Christian character appears defective, and shorn of its beauty. A character devoid of Christian sympathy wants a grand ornament; which is, indeed, akin to the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. What spectacle can be more lovely than the pure stream of sympathetic feeling encircling, in all its fulness, the mountain of the Lord's house.

There are times, dear friends, when expressions of Christian sympathy are required in a peculiar manner on the part of the people of God one toward another. These may be classed, for the most part, under the following heads :

1. *Sympathy is called for in circumstances of prosperity.* It is our duty to rejoice with them that do rejoice. This indicates a spirit of enlarged benevolence, and exhibits a character untainted by envy and other improper feelings. The man who does not rejoice when the lines have fallen to his brother in pleasant places, and when the tide of prosperity seems to flow in upon him, is, to say the least of it, a heartless Christian. In the season of Elizabeth's prosperity, we read that when "her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her, *they rejoiced with her.*" Such feeling arises from the very nature of the relationship which believers sustain to each other. "And whether one member suffer," says Paul, "all the members suffer with it; or *one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*" Great is the power of divine

grace, so great indeed that it can turn even suffering itself into matter of joy; and, under such circumstances, there is a call for holy sympathy. "Yea," says the apostle, "and if I be offered on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all, for the same cause do ye also joy and rejoice with me."

2. *Sympathy is called for in adversity.* "Bear ye one another's burdens," says Paul, "and thus fulfil the law of Christ." The life of the Christian is a chequered scene; light and shade alternating, but clouds frequently darkening his sky. The child of God ascends to heaven by a narrow way, which is frequently in this changeful state bestrewn with thorns. His course is through the vale of tears.

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

How cheering under such circumstances to the Christian pilgrim to have his path lighted up with the tender sympathy of his fellow-traveller. This is just like the genial rays of the vernal sun shining through the darkness of an April cloud. It is the voice of comfort and encouragement to him who buffets the angry waves; soothing his troubled spirit, and whispering in his ear, be of good cheer.

3. *Sympathy is called for in the season of affliction.* Adversity in every form is affliction; but by the term here, I mean more particularly, bodily, or mental suffering. God, in the dispensations of his all-wise providence, sees proper at times to cast his people into the furnace of affliction, that they may be purified, that they may come out of the furnace as silver seven times tried, that the trial of their faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the revelation of Jesus Christ. God sustains to his

people the relation of a father, and they are the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Hence they at times require chastisement. "If," says the Apostle, to the Hebrews, "ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." How soothing under such circumstances the expression of affectionate interest, the tear of brotherly sympathy, the voice of tender consolation, leading the sufferer to a consideration of the love, faithfulness, and promises of Christ, that our light affliction, as the Apostle expresses it, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. See to it, then, brethren, that your conduct in this respect be such as may entitle you in the great day of God Almighty to the commendation of our Divine Saviour. "I was sick, and ye visited me." It is much to be regretted, that professing Christians are not more alive to their duty in this respect. How often has the distracted sufferer just reason to complain of a want of sympathy on the part of his Christian brethren. For weeks, it may be, or for months, if he happen to be in the humbler ranks of life, has he been tossed on a bed of sickness and sorrow, while no Christian brother has entered his humble abode, to soothe his spirit with the expression of fraternal interest, or lead his distracted thoughts to the rich and hallowed consolations of the Gospel. And is this in keeping with the true character of Christians? Is this in harmony with the requirements of that religion which requires of those who profess it that they should put on, as the elect of God, bowels and mercies? Suffer not the world, dear friends, and its engagements, however pressing and important they may appear, to chill the heart, to dry up the

founts of Christian tenderness, and shut out the claims of religious duty. Be like your Master, compassionate as he was, and kind.

4. *Sympathy is demanded of Christians one towards another in seasons of bereavement.* We are bound to certain of our fellow-creatures in this life by strong natural ties, and the disruption of these is naturally the source of poignant sorrow. When death has entered our abodes, and laid his cold hand on the objects of our fondest delights, changed their countenances, and has sent them away, what heart possessed of natural sensibilities does not profusely bleed? In such cases, even the men of the world are wont to express their feelings of condolence; how much more is a feeling of sympathetic interest to be expected from the followers of Christ. Surely at such seasons we are specially called upon to weep with them that weep. Such a duty both nature and religion unite in recommending, and enforcing.

There are many other circumstances under which mutual sympathy among Christians becomes a duty to which it would be tedious particularly to refer. We ought not to forget we are fellow Christians; that we are destined to dwell for ever in a place of pure and hallowed sympathy, not indeed of sorrow, for that will be unknown amid the abodes of the blest, but that of perfect, unmingled, everlasting joy. Heaven is a region of perfect sympathy. There will be no isolated hearts there, no discordant harps, no in-harmonious voices.

“Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
But all their joys are one.”

The sight of the happiness of one will be an ingredient of the happiness of another. No one

will envy another because of the full cup of bliss which he tastes and enjoys.

Brethren, let us study to exhibit a spirit of Christian sympathy. This will strengthen the bonds of brotherly love, and give to the world an exhibition of the mild and benevolent spirit of the religion of Jesus. Selfishness chills the heart; Christianity warms it. It makes a man not a sentimentalist, but, in the fullest and best sense of the term, a man of feeling. Whoso shutteth up his bowels of compassion from his brethren in Christ, when occasion calls for it, is destitute of one of the loveliest features of the children of God; such a profession, divested of tender sympathy, has little to recommend it, is indeed unattractive, and even repulsive. Be it ours, then, to exemplify this benevolent and most amiable feeling.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

LETTER V.

ON THE DUTY OF PRAYER.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

THE privilege of prayer is one of the most valuable which the people of God enjoy. Place them where you will, the billows of calamity and sorrow rolling over them, amid the darkest scenes of life, disappointments, bereavements, or sickness, still, with access to a throne of grace, the privilege of intercourse with God, they are a happy people. In the secrecy of the closet, the troubled heart can unbosom itself in communion with God, and find relief; the devout worshipper can spread his griefs, his anxieties, and wants, before his heavenly Father, and obtain from his hands a supply of grace suited to his every need.

At a throne of mercy the Christian can pour into the ear of a sympathising Redeemer "the sad tale of all his care." And what a privilege it is to be permitted morning and evening to record at the family altar the mercies of the Lord, to thank him for his loving-kindness in the morning, and praise him for his faithfulness every night. Every rightly exercised Christian knows from experience the importance of social prayer, the blending of devout desires, and thanksgiving, in the public services of the sanctuary; and he highly values the recurrence of such hallowed seasons. But prayer is not

confined to the utterance of words merely. It ascends not unfrequently to the throne of God in broken accents, sighs, and the throbbings of the heart. Thus is the language of the poet verified—

“Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.”

Besides the unspeakable privilege and advantage of prayer, there is a high honour implied in its exercise. He who prays acceptably enjoys the distinguishing honour of intercourse with God. Men esteem it an honour to have fellowship with those in elevated stations of society. It is considered a high honour, as well as a privilege, to have free access to the sovereign, to have the opportunity of speaking in the ear of royalty. But the praying saint enjoys a far higher honour. He has access to the King of kings. He can at all times pour into his ear the feelings and desires of his heart, without reserve, with no fear of rebuke, but with the full assurance of a gracious reception.

God, who knows the necessities of his people, and what is for their real good infinitely better than they do, does not fail to enjoin upon them impressively in his holy word the duty of prayer. “Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee.” “Be careful for nothing,” says Paul, “but in everything, by prayer, and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God.”—“Be ye therefore sober,” says Peter, “and watch unto prayer.”—How pertinent the advice of David: “Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he will never suffer the righteous to be moved.” We are exhorted to pray without ceasing, and in

everything to give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us; to give thanks always for all things unto God, and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our blessed Lord put forth a parable to teach the important lesson, that men ought always to pray and not to faint.

The most holy men in all ages have been mighty in prayer. Their great strength lay there. Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and Samuel, and the holy prophets, were all men of prayer:—all finding their happiness, their joy, their comfort in sorrow, their victories over their spiritual and temporal enemies, in habitual communion with God. Let us, beloved friends, in this respect, be followers, of them, who through faith and patience, and from their recorded example, I may add, prayer also, are now inheriting the promises.

That we may have correct views of this important duty, it is necessary we should mark well certain qualities indispensable to its acceptance with God. The following, dear brethren, demand our serious attention:—

1. *Prayer in order to its acceptance with God must be fervent.* Cold, formal, lifeless addresses to the Deity, want the very soul of acceptable prayer. Brethren, it is to be feared there is too little heart in our prayers, too little agonising, too little of devout breathings, too little wrestling. It was when Jacob *wrestled* with the angel at Mahanaim, that he obtained the name of Israel—a name which showed the divine approval, “as a prince, thou hast power with God, and hast prevailed.” How fervent were the prayers of David, “Blessed art thou, O Lord! teach me thy statutes. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

My soul cleaveth unto the dust, quicken thou me according to thy word. My soul melteth for heaviness, strengthen thou me according to thy word. Make haste, O God, to deliver me : make haste to help me, O Lord. But I am poor and needy : make haste unto me, O God ; thou art my help and my deliverer. O Lord, make no tarrying."

2. *We must persevere in prayer in order to its acceptance with God.* We are exceedingly apt to grow faint in this holy exercise. There is enough of what is of the "earth, earthy," to chill the ardour of devotional feeling in the minds of the most heavenly, and to prevent the soul from dwelling so often and so fully as it ought in the mount with God. God delights in the frequent visits of his people to his throne of grace. He is never wearied with hearing their supplications ; his ear is ever open to their cry ; he is never displeased with the number of their petitions. "Evening, and morning, and at noon," says David, "will I pray and cry aloud ; and He shall hear my voice." Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to "pray without ceasing." The duty is enjoined upon the Ephesians of "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," an exhortation, dear friends, applicable to us as well as them to whom it was originally addressed. An old minister once said to a person who had been complaining of a want of success in prayer, "Go again seven times." Do any of you complain that your prayers have not been answered ? Let me say to you, brethren, "Go again seven times."

3. *If we would pray acceptably, we must pray in faith.* In all our approaches unto a throne of grace, we must be found ever "looking unto Jesus." Every petition we present, must be presented in

his name. His person, his work, his merits, his glory, must be ever in view as the ground of our confidence and hope, whensoever we draw near unto God in prayer. Moreover, we must lay hold in this exercise of his promises, and plead them with unwavering confidence in their fulfilment. What God has promised, we are bound to believe, and plead before him at a throne of grace; not that he needs to be reminded of his promises, but it is his will that we should show we have not forgotten them, and are resting upon them in the exercise of a patient and steady confidence.

Thus, brethren, you see the kind of prayer which God will accept and answer. Let us look up to him for the outpouring of his Spirit, that we may be enabled to worship him in the beauty of holiness, and pray with acceptance.

Great are our encouragements to pray. God never yet said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain. He has promised his Spirit to help us. "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought. But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. God has in all ages sustained the character of the hearer of prayer. "O thou," says David, "that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come."—"We have not an High Priest," says the Apostle Paul, "which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—Our Divine Master himself has said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in

my name, I will do it." Again; "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." God may not answer our prayers at the time and in the way we may desire. He is infinitely wise, and knows perfectly what is best for us; and it may be, that what we think would be for our good, might in reality prove injurious. Let us leave all with him. Though the answer of prayer may seem to be delayed, let us not be discouraged. Are we his children, then it is all for our good. Hear the experience of David: "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He took me also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God."

Brethren, be instant in prayer. Would you wish to prosper in the divine life, to fight the good fight of faith, and overcome your spiritual enemies, to recommend the religion you profess to all around, to live under a sense of the enjoyment of God's love, to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour, you must be much in prayer. On no account neglect the duties of the closet. If so, your religion will soon become cold, lifeless, and formal. God has done much for you; thank him for his grace and mercy; you have been unprofitable servants, implore his forgiveness; you cannot advance one step heavenward without his help; seek, then, at his throne of grace, strength, wisdom, and guidance. Spread your wants before him in the retirement of the closet, and pray that he may supply them all according to his

riches in glory by Jesus Christ. Heads of families, be punctual in discharging the duty of family prayer. God is the God of families as well as of individuals. Let this, then, be the resolution of each : "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Would you have the dew of heaven, in its purity and richness, descending on the tabernacle where you dwell, you must carefully maintain the worship of God in your families. Never absent yourselves without a reason which would satisfy your conscience in the sight of God, from the Church prayer meeting. Show that you value social prayer—the communion of saints. Let your prayers embrace yourselves, your families, the church, your pastor, the world. Pray much for the peace of Jerusalem. Remember, it is said, they shall prosper that love thee. Let each pray in the spirit of the words of the prophet, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake will I not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

Thus, my beloved friends, if you are men of prayer, you will be men of power. Restrain prayer, and you will be powerless for good, exposed to every temptation, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.

Restraint of prayer, we cease to fight;
 Prayer makes the Christian armour bright;
 And Satan trembles when he sees
 The weakest saint upon his knees.

Pray much, pray fervently, pray in faith, and God will bless you, and make you a blessing. He will look down upon you from his sanctuary's height with complacency. He will pour down blessings

upon you as showers on the mown grass. You shall walk all the day long in the light of his countenance. The joy of the Lord will be your strength, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds by Jesus Christ. Soul-prosperity and prayer are inseparable. As soon might you expect the grass of the field to grow, or the flowers thereof to blossom without the light of the sun or the dew of heaven, as a soul to prosper in the divine life without the blessing of God, and that blessing, be it remembered, descends through the medium of prayer. Improve these hints, dear friends, I beseech you, and may the blessing of the Most High rest upon you. Amen.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

LETTER VI.

ON THE DUTY OF SELF-EXAMINATION.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

To be deceived under any form is always disagreeable; frequently inconvenient; in some cases, pregnant with imminent danger. The man who, misled by the aspect of objects around him, mistakes his way, may subject himself to much pain and annoyance; and, for aught he knows, may, if not peculiarly upon his guard, fall into some pit, or stumble over some frightful precipice, and be dashed to pieces. How sad and disastrous the illusion of the mariner, who, beguiled by the haze on shore, steers right on to the rocky coast, in the full hope all the while he is about to enter some commodious harbour, till undeceived by finding his ship a wreck, and himself sinking to rise no more.

But to be deceived in matters of a temporary and worldly nature, is of trivial consequence compared with that of deception in regard to the things of eternity. Deception in regard to our eternal interests, involves the direst calamity, irreparable misery. The effect of being deceived as regards the momentous affair of reconciliation with God, through the blood of His Son, our interest in his pardoning love, our title to the heavenly inheritance, involves the ruin of the immortal soul; and who

can estimate the magnitude of such a loss? "Were the whole fabric of nature to become animated and vocal," says Robert Hall, referring to such a disaster in one of his most powerful and eloquent passages, "would it be possible for her to utter a groan too deep, or a cry too piercing, to express the magnitude and extent of such a catastrophe?"

What embitters, moreover, the misery of such a calamity is, that multitudes are self-deluded, self-duped. How dreadful the thought, that many shut their eyes on the brink of everlasting ruin, and please themselves with the idle fancy that they are in a position of perfect safety, till they find themselves plunged into the abyss of unending misery.

Now, one great preservation against such imminent peril, lies in self-examination. Dear friends, as you value your eternal interest, neglect it not. Tremble at the thought of self-delusion. Self-examination, if you are in the right way, will only confirm your steps; and, if you are in the wrong, oh, how necessary you should be sensible of your real condition. "Examine yourselves," says Paul, writing to the Corinthians, "whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not yourselves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." Let each professor of religion, therefore, turn his thoughts inward upon himself; examine the frame of his own spirit; search the chambers of imagery, and review the entire tenor of his external deportment. How important such an exercise, and what grace is needed in order to its profitable and faithful performance.

Permit me, dear friends, to submit with all affection, a few directions to guide you in the proper discharge of this duty.

1. *Self-examination must be undertaken and conducted with prayer, and in the spirit of devout dependance on God.* The help of that God who searches the heart, and tries the reins, is indispensable, in order to our arriving at just views of our own characters. This must be sought by prayer. "Search me, O God," said David, "and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Let the duty, therefore, be attended to with entire self-renunciation and humble prayer.

2. *Self-examination ought to be conducted with jealous watchfulness against self-imposition.* The human heart is partial to itself, and naturally deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Millions of precious souls have been deluded, and sent down to hell by this deceiver. Even when partially sanctified, the heart is still apt to induce a man to think himself "to be something when he is nothing." Brethren, beware of its delusions. Permit not yourselves to be imposed upon by a name. Be not deceived by the varnish of an outside morality. "Many," says Christ, "will say to me in that day, Lord! Lord! have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that do iniquity." Go beneath the surface of character. Look to principle, weigh motives; hold the balance in judgment with a steady hand. Be faithful to your own selves. Let no deceptive principle bias your judgments in this most solemn matter.

3. *Self-examination ought to embrace the entire state of the soul: the thoughts, affections, will, con-*

science, with the whole of the outward life and conversation. There can be no better test of character than the habitual flow of our thoughts. It is declared in Scripture of the wicked man, that God is not in all his thoughts. The worldly man's thoughts are in the world. Should he by an effort of mind withdraw them from its pursuits and objects for a moment, as soon as that effort is relaxed, they spontaneously return to their former element. What a fine criterion of character does the state of the affections afford? How do we feel when the name of God is blasphemed, when dishonour is put upon our Divine Master, when reproach is cast upon his cause? Are our affections set upon the things above, not on things on the earth? What is the character of our zeal?—a zeal for God, or for the interests of a party? Let the conscience and the will also pass the ordeal of a careful scrutiny. What are our likings? What our desires? What the bent of our inclinations? Are we the subjects of a sensitive dread of offending God in thought, word, and deed? Is conscience tender? Are we afraid of sinning? Along with such searchings of heart, we ought carefully to examine the character of the life. Has our conduct been such as to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men? Have we sought to live in peace with all men? Have we been upright in our transactions, feeling no disposition to take the advantage, or overreach our fellow-men in our dealings? What fruit have we brought forth to the praise and glory of God? Try your own selves, dear brethren, in this way. Leave nothing undone by which you may in any sense be enabled to form a correct judgment of your own standing in the sight of God, whether you have been born again, and are the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

4. *Along with the habitual inspection of our own lives, let there be regular and stated seasons for self-examination.* These should be observed with fasting and prayer. This is to invest the duty with its proper solemnity. This, too, will preserve it from sinking into neglect, or being partially observed.

Take, dear friends, these plain hints for your direction in attending to this duty. Should you, after a careful, scriptural, and prayerful self-examination, come to the conclusion that you are on the Lord's side, that you are partakers of a divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world, through lust, this will assuredly have a happy effect on your progress in the divine life; inspired with holy confidence and devout gratitude, you will be enabled to go on your way rejoicing in the Lord, to mount up as on eagles' wings, to run and not be faint, to walk and not be weary. But on the other hand, should you discover that ye are still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, you cannot be too soon apprised of your real state and danger. A sense of your own misery in such circumstances must precede a position of safety; and if the discovery of your true character shall have the effect of bringing you into a state of reconciliation with God, you will have cause to bless him for it through time and through eternity.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

LETTER VII.

ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF AFFLICTION.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

THE word of God declares, and experience illustrates and sadly confirms the sentiment, that “man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward.” No man has a monopoly of health and prosperity. How flowery soever the path he treads through life may be, occasional clouds darken his path, and enter he must, ultimately, the valley and shadow of death, and submit to the pangs of dissolution. Nor are the people of God exempted from the ills incident to humanity. Nay, more; they have troubles peculiar to themselves; trials arising even from the profession of that religion, which is the source, in so many respects, of joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Christianity has, it is true, its delectable mountains, its spiritual Pisgahs, its visions of celestial bliss; but it has its sorrows, too, its tearful vales, and its cloudy scenes, not indeed of its essence, but yet inseparable from it. “Many,” says David, “are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.”

Numerous, indeed, are the sources of affliction in this life. Looking at the professed people of God, we find not a few, of whom it may be said, they go mourning all the day long. The incubus of worldly

care seems to press down the spirits of some, the necessity of making provision for the day that is passing over them, seems to drink up their energies. Domestic trials crowd around others. Death has entered the family circle. A chasm has been made never to be filled up. The heart is desolate. The tender recollection of past endearments rises to view, and hangs as a sombre shade on the fondest delights of those so circumstanced. Perhaps the source of affliction may be of another kind—a profligate son, an undutiful daughter, or some other domestic trial. Sorrows at times arise from the world around us. Persecution rages, the tongue of slander moves, character is attacked, motives misrepresented, religion exposed to mockery and contempt. Trials sometimes arise out of the state of the Church, and the conduct of Christian brethren. Not unfrequently are the followers of Christ called to drink into the cup of bodily sufferings. Confined to the solitary chamber, tossed on the sick pillow, the spirits depressed, and the frame distracted, the Christian can at times appropriate the language of David—“Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly : I go mourning all the day long, for my loins are filled with a loathsome disease : and there is no soundness in my flesh all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.”

To enumerate, my dear friends, all the sources of affliction in the Christian life, would be tedious, and perhaps, impossible. Suffice it to say, affliction in some shape, in not a few cases, severe and protracted, may be regarded as constituting an element in the lot of God’s children here. Let not the Christian in the furnace therefore imagine, that any “temptation

has taken him, but such as is common to man." Let him rather inquire how he may best improve the trial? in what way the present chastening may be so improved as to yield afterward the peaceable fruit of righteousness?

Let me suppose I address myself in these pages to some afflicted disciple of the Lord Jesus. Afflicted Christian, let me affectionately call your attention to the following considerations :

1. *Remember that all events are under the control of an all-wise and good God.* No trial comes without his permission. An event may appear mysterious and dark, but it is only so to us. God has the most clear apprehensions of its true character. When he sends affliction, he sees there is a "need be" for it. We see but the dark side of the cloud, but God sees both. He perceives a prospective advantage, that more than compensates the present calamity. Could the eye of Job have pierced the cloud of his present sufferings, and have beheld the prosperity of his latter days, how greatly must the sunshine of the scene have gladdened his heart, and inspired his confidence in the wisdom and goodness of God! Our Father in heaven cannot err; besides the infinite goodness of his nature precludes the idea that he could be unkind. God is love. If he send affliction, he will assuredly give grace sufficient to enable those who are exercised thereby, to bear up under the trial. How consoling to the afflicted saint to know that the rod is in the hand of his heavenly Father, and that "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Let the sons and daughters of affliction be comforted in this, that the Lord reigneth; and that all circumstances in the lot of his children, whether prosperous

or calamitous, he will overrule for the ultimate good of his people and his own glory.

2. Further: *Consider well, afflicted Christian, the ends of affliction.* Perhaps your trials, among other reasons, may have been sent, that God may thereby illustrate the riches of his grace, his faithfulness, his infinite compassion, in consoling, sustaining, and cheering the downcast, and the distressed, and thus afford you the sweet experience arising from the knowledge of his revealed character, as—"the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." Trials are sometimes sent to illustrate the vigour and steadfastness of the believer's faith, as in the case of Abraham, when called to offer up his son Isaac, and happy the man whose faith fails not in the hour of trial.

The chief end of affliction, however, is that of salutary discipline. This no child of God should ever lose sight of. When the people of God are cast into the furnace, it is in order that they may come out of it as silver seven times tried. The fiery ordeal consumes their dross, and makes their graces shine all the brighter. Gold, when tried by fire, *proves* itself to be gold. Gilded metals, and polished brass, may pass with the inexperienced for it, but no gilded substance can ever stand the fiery test. So it is with the Christian's graces. Patience, humility, submission, love, and the other principles of the Christian character, are tried in the furnace, and if genuine, show themselves to be so; counterfeit graces are detected, and the sufferer's faith confirmed. "Tribulation," says Paul, "worketh patience, and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which

is given unto us." "My brethren," says James, "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Thus, when we contemplate the good accruing to the people of God from their trials, it is easy to be seen how affliction becomes a blessing; and we understand the force of the Apostle's language—"Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Thus, chastisement becomes a privilege—a blessing. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterwards, it yieldeth the peaceable spirit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby."

3. *Mark well, afflicted Christian, how many mercies are mingled even in the cup of thy sorrows.* Is thy heart sinking under the pressure of worldly adversity? Then remember the promise—"My grace is sufficient for thee." One drop of grace from the cistern of divine love, can sweeten the bitterest draught of affliction. One ray of divine light on the Christian's path can enable him to pass through the gloomiest shades of adversity, rejoicing in the God of his salvation. Perhaps, the Christian is called to submit to disappointment in the joys of the heart; the sweet flowers of Christian love, which he had hoped to treasure up in the garner of the affections for many a long year, are laid in the dust by some destructive breath of cold neglect; yet he has the friendship of that Almighty friend that sticketh closer than a brother. When bereavement has cast its darkening shade over the soul, how consoling to the Christian heart to be privileged to

cherish the good hope, that the dear departed are not lost, but gone before. The anguish of separation thus melts away, under the consoling thought, into the light of holy acquiescence and chastened joy. In the season of bodily distress, when confined to the sick chamber, and perhaps, laid on the bed of affliction, how many mercies are often mingled with the chastisement! The afflicted saint has a house to dwell in, a bed to lie upon, medicine to alleviate his pains, kind relatives to minister to his wants, friends to sympathise with him, Christian brethren to meet with him, and to pray with him and for him; some of these mercies, perhaps all of them, are bestowed upon him. What room, under such circumstances, for gratitude to God; cheerful submission to his will, and holy confidence in his wisdom. Would the people of God only look at the tokens of divine goodness, so frequently manifested in the midst of their afflictions, they would find themselves encompassed with many expressions of the love of a merciful Jehovah, who,

When he lifts the chastening rod,
'Tis as our Father and our God.

4. *Let me beseech thee, afflicted saint, to recal the memory of the Lord's goodness to thy soul under former trying visitations.* When thou didst pass through the waters, did he forsake thee? When thou wast bowed down, did he not raise thee up? Friends, it may be, forsook thee, but did he? Did not the light of his countenance burst through the cloud which darkened thy sky? Afflicted believer! remember what thy God hath done for thee in times past, and be encouraged. David did so. "O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and

of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." This is to make a happy use of our experience of the ways and goodness of God, and what every Christian ought to do in the season of trial. Thus David encouraged his heart—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

6. *Reflect, afflicted believer, on the brevity of all earthly trials, to be followed in the experience of God's people with the unending enjoyments of heavenly felicity.* "For our light affliction," says Paul, "which is but a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things that are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." The path which the Christian may be called to tread, may be beset with thorns; but it is a short one. The cup which he has to drink may be bitter, but its contents will soon be exhausted. The battle which he may have to fight may be a keen one, but it will be soon ended:

Though painful at present,
'Twill cease before long,
And then, O how pleasant
The conqueror's song.

The sufferings of earth are but a prelude to the bliss of heaven. Who then so faint-hearted as to murmur under these, and allow his spirits to sink in the prospect of the glory to be revealed? Truly one hour of the blessedness of heaven, will be more than enough to compensate for a whole life of suffering. "I reckon," says the Apostle, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared

with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Afflicted Christian, be of good cheer; thy warfare shall soon be accomplished. Ere long the days of thy mourning shall be ended, and thou shalt tread for ever that happy shore

Where tempests never beat, nor billows roar.

Surely there is enough to sustain the heart under the heaviest affliction, in the thought, the well-grounded assurance, that it shall soon be exchanged for the delights of that happy company in the skies, "who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Let us, then, be of good comfort amid the trying scenes of our pilgrimage journey here.

We're marching through Emmanuel's ground
To fairer worlds on high.

No sorrowing sigh shall ever heave the bosom there; no pang of disappointment lacerate the heart, no tear ever dim the eye, no shade of grief ever cloud the brow, nor pain distract the frame; but those who shall be privileged to dwell there "shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow, and sighing, shall flee away."

Christian brethren, let these considerations cheer and console your spirits in the season of calamity.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

LETTER VIII.

ON THE WAY TO GAIN OFFENDING BRETHREN.¹

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

THE duty of seeking to gain the confidence and love of offending brethren, is too much, I fear, lost sight of. Some there are who seem to hesitate whether it ought to be included in the class of Christian obligations at all. It is not altogether an uncommon thing to hear a professor of religion expressing himself in reference to another who has really, or as he imagines, offended him, in terms somewhat similar to these: "Mean fellow, I shall not be the first to seek a place in his good graces, his hatred or esteem are alike indifferent to me, and neither are worth much." Now, let me simply ask, is such a spirit Bible-like? Is it Christ-like? Is it proper? No, verily; such a spirit is at utter variance with the genius and morality of the Gospel.

That offences should come, even among the people of God, is what in our partially sanctified condition here, we may indeed expect. Our minds are variously attuned. The feelings of some are peculiarly sensitive, and easily hurt. Some are irascible, soon angry, and the collision of such with kindred spirits, we may naturally calculate upon, as likely to give birth to offences. Inflammable materials brought together are apt to ignite. The loquacity and unguarded talk of some give

occasion to offences. "The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things"—"an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." Some are too forward, Diotrephes-like in their deportment, and thereby give offence to their brethren. Unmortified pride is the cause of numberless offences. Sometimes offences arise out of mere misunderstandings. It is not necessary, however, to enumerate, or dwell upon the grounds of offences among professors; the fact of their not unfrequent occurrence is obvious; and the question therefore is, What is our duty in reference to them? To this question, dear friends, let me affectionately call your attention.

With regard to those conscious of having given offence, I would merely say a word. Men and brethren, have you been chargeable with wounding heedlessly and rashly, the feelings of a Christian brother? Are you conscious of it? Then your duty is that of immediate acknowledgment, and as far as may be, reparation. But I am mainly anxious to point out the duty of those who have been offended. Are they to sit down in contentment with the breach that has been made? Are they to suffer alienation and hatred to usurp the place in their hearts formerly claimed by friendship and love? Are they to attempt nothing to soften the offender into a sense of the wrong done, and restore to its wonted channel the flow of Christian affection unhappily interrupted? We are too apt to overlook the course of duty under such circumstances, but it is no less obvious than important.

The Word of God—the grand directory of the entire course of our lives—is on this point most explicit. Observe, first, how strongly it reprobates all those resentful feelings which operate as an impedi-

ment to reconciliation, and how strongly it enjoins the cultivation of those that are favourable to it. "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth"—"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."—"Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

But further, we have full instructions how to proceed in order to the removal of misunderstandings, and regaining the affections of those who have trespassed against us. "If thy brother," says our Lord, "shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou has gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church." How many invert the order of this rule, and go about telling their grievances to any and to everybody before they speak to the offender himself, who might be gained by a single word fitly spoken. Every effort to allay irritation, and gain offenders, must be plied in the spirit of kindness. This is the grand catholicon which softens the irritated bosom, and heals the wounded spirit. Oh! that men were wise, that they but understood the power of this instrument, what moral miracles they might achieve!

what fires of strife they might extinguish! what blessings they might inherit! “Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest.”—Again: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.” Paul, in writing to the Romans, employs almost the same phraseology—“Bless them who persecute you, bless and curse not; therefore, if thine enemy hunger feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head:” that is, such conduct would cause the person who had acted the unworthy part, to feel all the pain of shame and compunction; would cause him to blush for his improper behaviour, and thus have the effect of bringing him to a proper state of mind. “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

How refreshing to contemplate the practical illustrations of this principle presented to view, in the sacred volume. The history of Joseph is replete with them. The conduct of David towards Saul, in sparing the life of his enemy when in his power, affords a striking and illustrious proof of the same principle in softening the heart, and slaying the enmity that lodged in the bosom. The monarch was so touched by the generous conduct of David, that he burst into a strain expressive of the emotions of his heart, in terms of thrilling interest—“Thou art more righteous than I: for Thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded Thee evil. And thou hast showed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch, as when the Lord had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not.

For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away. Wherefore, the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day."

But turn, dear friends, to the life of our blessed Lord. Let this be your constant study. Never were such bright illustrations of the principle of overcoming evil with good, elsewhere exhibited. His whole life was one brilliant commentary upon it. Reproach and hatred he sought ever to overcome with meekness and benevolence; misrepresentation, cursing, mockery, and contempt, with patient forbearance and well-doing. When reviled, he reviled not again; when threatened, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. And what a heart-touching lesson of unutterable benevolence is that set before us in the words of our Lord to his disciples, ere he ascended to glory, in which he intimated his will that they should commence their ministry in the midst of his murderers. "Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." This was the very sublime of benevolence and mercy, the God-like effulgence of the word made flesh who dwelt among us. The sages and poets of antiquity never dreamt of this way of destroying evil. The principle is peculiar to Christianity, and proves it to be of God. The entire scheme of the Gospel, as you will, dear friends, perceive, is founded on the principle of overcoming evil with good. God, the offended party, seeks man the offender, plies him with invitations of mercy,

holds forth the proffer of reconciliation and favour; and by the exhibition of the unutterable riches of his grace, wins over the heart of the offender to obedience and love. Had God acted like many in regard to those who have trespassed against them, we should never have heard of a Saviour and a propitiation; but should have lived and died without the consolations connected with "the word of reconciliation," and gone down to the chambers of death without a ray of hope. "But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved through his life."

Friends and brethren, let it be our unvarying aim to demean ourselves agreeably to this principle. Should it then so happen that at any time misunderstandings or offences do unhappily arise, they will soon be removed, and we shall have the comfort of knowing that we live in peace with all men, in love to the brethren, and under the smile of heaven. The palm-tree, in all its beauty, is but an imperfect image of the man, who lives with the affections of his fellow-men clustering around him, a peace-maker and a peace-keeper, loving and beloved by all.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

LETTER IX.

 ON THE PASTORAL RELATION, AND THE DUTIES
 RECIPROCALLY INVOLVED.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

THE gracious and abiding care of Christ for the interests of his Church, is strikingly apparent in the provision which he has made for its edification in the appointment of the Christian ministry. He has not only provided a rich pasture in the ordinances of his Gospel for that flock which he has purchased with his own blood, but has also provided under-shepherds to watch over the flock, and lead them to the green pasturage of spiritual delights, where they lie down in safety by the still waters. "And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry; for the edifying of the body of Christ." The pastoral relation is thus highly important, giving rise to reciprocal obligations and responsibilities. Permit me, therefore, dear brethren, to direct your attention first to what you may reasonably expect from your pastor; and, secondly, to what he has a right to expect from you.

1. *The pastor is bound to study diligently the word of God, so that by the application of sound doctrine, he*

may be able to edify the flock, to comfort, and build up the Christian in his most holy faith. No kindness of heart, or outward attentions, can ever compensate for indolence in the study. Every pastor should diligently strive to have his mind enriched with the treasures of wisdom and knowledge contained in the divine word, so that he may sustain the character of "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed;" and by manifestation of the truth, may commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Paul exhorts Timothy to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Never do aught to induce your pastor to neglect his studies, otherwise you will soon reap the fruit in leanness to your own souls. Alas ! for the people who delight in the polite civilities and wit of their pastor in the parlour, but have little concern for his reputation in the pulpit. Such are not his friends, nor their own. Brethren, the chief business of the Christian minister is to preach the word ; and, in order to do his work well, he ought to spare no pains, so that he may become mighty in the Scriptures, and be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince the gainsayers. You have a right therefore to expect your pastor will employ every talent he possesses to promote your edification, use every means whereby he may be able, by faithful and nervous expositions of divine truth, to advance your growth in grace, and extend the kingdom of his Lord and Master.

2. *It is the duty of the pastor to visit the flock, especially in sickness, and supply those consolations which the circumstances of the case require.* He should be a man of sympathy and tenderness. Christians, however, sometimes err in regard to pastoral visits. Many expect far too much. It is, more-

over, unreasonable to expect one should do what he had, perhaps, no means of knowing he ought to do. It is the duty of those who wish to see their pastor in affliction, to acquaint him carefully with their wishes. Besides, too frequent visits would be neither profitable for him, nor for them. The time consumed in them would be so much lost as regards the closet and the study, and the effects would soon show themselves in the decline of his piety, and the poverty of his public instructions.

3. *The Christian pastor is bound to exhort privately, to admonish, and sometimes even to rebuke.* Some, it is to be feared, look upon the last-mentioned duty rather in the light of pragmatistical intermeddling, than in that of positive privilege. Few like to be told their own faults. But difficult and delicate as the work of administering rebuke is, it is, nevertheless, a duty devolving on the Christian pastor which he must not neglect. It is what a Christian ought to expect at the hands of his pastor, when he falls into sin, a privilege which way soever he view it, and what the faithful pastor cannot neglect without bringing guilt on his own soul.

4. *Every member of the flock has a right to expect an abiding interest in the prayers of the pastor.* Not only is it the privilege of each to share in the petitions presented at a throne of grace in the public assembly, but all ought to have an interest in the prayers and supplications of his pastor in the secrecy of the closet. Could Christians only behold their pastors on their knees, where no eye could see them but that of Omniscience, pouring out supplications to God in their behalf, the spectacle would surely touch their hearts, and give to those who "watch for their souls," a stronger hold of

their affectionate sympathies, than they ever yet possessed. And though, dear friends, you may never behold with the eye of the body such a spectacle, it ought to be realized in your minds, as being an interesting, and to you, certainly an important reality.

Such is a brief view of the duty of the pastor as regards the flock over which he has been made an overseer. Let me now, brethren, solicit your attention to the duties which you owe to him. The fidelity of the Christian pastor is dependent, in no small degree, on the conduct of those among whom he ministers in holy things. A cold, formal church, will be exceedingly apt to make a cold perfunctory pastor. If a professedly Christian community is neglectful of their duty to their spiritual instructor, there is every probability he will soon become remiss in his duty to them. And even on the supposition that his own piety suffers no material detriment, what a discouraging weight must the conduct of his flock bring upon his heart. It is, therefore, of great importance that Christians should mark well the duties which they owe to their pastors, and aim, in dependance on divine grace, at their faithful performance.

1. *Christians owe to their pastors a high degree of esteem and Christian love.* While all the members of a Church are bound to love each other with a pure heart fervently, the pastor has peculiar claims on a large share of their affectionate regards. "And we beseech you, brethren," says Paul, "to know them who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." Let the professed followers of Christ, therefore, contemplate

frequently the character of their pastor's work, the mental exertion, watchfulness, anxieties, hopes, disappointments, sorrows, difficulties, prayers, it involves, in order that their hearts may be in a state to cherish that cordial esteem and love towards those who are "over them in the Lord."

2. *Submission to pastoral authority is another important duty which Christians owe to their pastors.* "Obey them," says Paul, "that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you." Such obedience does not, of course, extend to what is wrong in itself, or affect the conscience, nor does it imply a sinking of individual judgment in deference to the dictates of sacerdotal authority, but simply a readiness to submit to the law of Christ as expounded by the pastor, and also a disposition to uphold his rule in all arrangements he considers necessary for the maintenance of the order and harmony of the community over which he presides. The pastor has no "carnal weapons" by which he can enforce obedience. Such he desires not. They are altogether unsuitable to his purposes. Nor must he "lord it over God's heritage." The rod of his power is that of love. His strength is moral. Hence the duty of those with whom he has to do, in taking care not to "lord it" over him, lest they should thereby crush his spirits, and be guilty of contemning not his, but the authority of his Master.

3. *Another duty devolving on Christians toward their pastors is that of temporal support.* The law of Christ with regard to this duty is most explicit. "Who goeth," says Paul, in the eleventh chapter

of his first epistle to the Corinthians, "a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock;" and, after referring to some other very pertinent illustrations of this law in the kingdom of Christ, he concludes his argument as follows: "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." Every member of a Christian Church should, therefore, do *something* for the support of his pastor, and the contributions of all should be in amount, just as the Lord hath prospered them. This is not always attended to, for the poor frequently give vastly more in proportion to their ability than the rich. It is the duty of all to see to it, that their pastor be "without carefulness," and more especially does this devolve on those who are appointed to manage the temporal affairs of the church. Pastors frequently feel great delicacy in pressing this duty on the attention of their congregations from the pulpit, knowing that they seek not theirs, but them, and fearing lest such a course should have the aspect of selfishness on their parts, and thereby hinder their work; and hence it is sometimes overlooked by the people, entirely from the want of having their attention directed to it. Indeed, in most cases, such neglect is more to be ascribed to a want of thought than that of generosity, for the people are almost always prepared to do for the pastor who lives in their affectionate sympathies, beyond what he could anticipate or hope for, provided the way for expressing their liberality is only pointed out to them.

4. *Christians are bound to wait regularly on the ministry of their respective pastors.* Those, who

without reason, absent themselves from the ordinances of public worship, adopt the most direct course to defeat the very ends of the Christian ministry. Their conduct is an act of cruelty to their pastors. It tends to sink their spirits, paralyse their mental energies, and break the very arm of their ministerial strength. What injury has been done to the feelings and usefulness of many a devoted pastor, by the conduct of his flock, in forsaking the assembling of themselves together! Placed in the midst of an affectionate and attached people, many a faithful labourer would have shone as a burning and a shining light, who, in consequence of his position, has had his light dimmed and quenched, so that ere he has reached the mid-day of life, he has sunk as a pale half-extinguished star beneath the horizon, amid the neglect and coldness of a people who knew not their own mercies. But brethren, the writer has no cause to complain of you in this respect. You have never manifested any want of interest in his public ministry. Ever remember, the more you value his labours, the more will he be stimulated no doubt, in dependance on divine grace, to more vigorous efforts to render them worthy of your esteem, such as shall meet, as far as may be, the circumstances, of all, and be in every sense, "to the use of edifying."

5. *Christians are bound to hold up the hands of their pastors by persevering fervent prayer.* How earnestly does an inspired apostle intreat an interest in the prayers of the people of God. "Brethren, pray for us." "Withal praying also for us." "Now, I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus' sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." If, therefore,

an apostle needed the prayers of Christians, how much more ordinary pastors.

Ministers of the gospel are but instruments in the divine hand — earthen vessels into which the precious treasure of divine truth is placed by God himself. How can a professor of religion expect to be edified under the ministry of his pastor, who never bears him upon his spirits in the closet, never implores divine assistance in his behalf. Ah, how heartless must the preaching of that man be, who addresses a prayerless people! Orthodox it may be, but it cannot be soul-stirring; clear it may be, but it must be cold; popular it may be, but it cannot be powerful. There is in such a case no heaven-directed wire to bring down the electric might of the Spirit's converting influence on the hearts of the careless, the worldly-minded, and the carnally secure. To the want of prayer for the pastor, may undoubtedly be traced up in some cases, the small number of conversions which sometimes occur under a faithful ministry. Many are apt to look for the cause of this in the pastor; but, in many cases, it will be found in the people; conversion is God's work, and how can it be expected frequently if his divine aid is but seldom and feebly implored?

The evils resulting from the want of prayer on the part of Christians in behalf of their pastors, are of the most serious nature. Religious formality, a disposition to speculate on points of doctrine to the neglect of practical duties, a dwarfish and stunted degree of spiritual growth, a sectarian spirit, a lukewarm Laodicean frame; these and many other evils may all have their origin in neglect of this duty. Let me, dear brethren, affectionately beg an interest in your supplications at a throne of mercy. Re-

member your pastor in the closet, in the family, and whensoever you draw near to God in the hallowed exercise of prayer. Thus you may expect the dews of heaven to descend upon your own souls, and the blessing of the Most High to accompany the labours of your pastor.

You thus perceive, brethren, the importance of the pastoral relation. Happy that church where pastor and people are mutually alive to their respective obligations. Prosperity must follow. The heart of the pastor is cheered by the spirit and conduct of his flock. His hands are held up, his mental energies braced, his spiritual strength augmented. His soul is more completely thrown into his work. He lives in a more emphatic sense for his people. They in return reap the benefit of all this in their own souls. Their spiritual edification is promoted by faithful and bold expositions of divine truth, their hearts refreshed by a ministry redolent of Christ and the sweets of his gospel, while the kingdom of their blessed Lord, through such instrumentality, is extended on every hand.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

LETTER X.

ON THE WAY TO PROMOTE UNITY AMONG CHRIST-
IANS OF DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

IT is impossible to contemplate the aspect of the Christian Church in modern times without painful concern. Division has not only succeeded in thrusting itself into the sanctuary the Lord, but seems to have taken up its abode there, and to trample in scornful defiance on the intimations of heavenly charity that it should withdraw. The consequences are greatly to be deprecated. The diversity of sentiment which exists, an evil in itself to be deplored, but considering the infirmities of our common nature, and the circumstances of the case, perhaps, unavoidable—has frequently given rise to strife, heart-burnings, jealousies, envy, and alienation of heart, to the great detriment of vital godliness; interrupting the flow of Christian sympathy, and severing, and keeping asunder those who ought to have been united in the bonds of love for the defence and furtherance of the gospel.

As regards the ground of this diversity of sentiment, I am not at present about to speak. My object is simply to point out the course best adapted, in my view, to allay, and finally remove existing divi-

sions, to close up the breaches already made, to heal, as far as may be, the wounds of pious hearts, and thus by bringing the people of God into closer union, confound the adversaries, and advance the progress of truth.

That such an end can never be attained by concealing or dissembling our conscientious convictions, is obvious. God loves "simplicity and godly sincerity," and will never honour the expedients of carnal policy for the promotion of so desirable an end. Besides, frankness, integrity, decided principle, will always commend themselves to honourable and right-thinking minds. Truth demands that every man avow his conscientious convictions with holy boldness. The Bible knows nothing of that spurious liberality which would cloak or compromise the dictates of conscience for the sake of a sentimental apparent harmony. But whilst the truth ought to be spoken, must be spoken, it ought always to be spoken in love. Our arguments must not be poisoned shafts to wound and to kill, but the "cords of a man and bands of love," to draw and to unite. With the law of charity in our hearts and the language of love on our lips, we shall not be in danger of giving offence while we temperately, but firmly propound as occasion may require, our conscientious convictions; but, on the contrary, have every reason to hope, we shall be honoured to advance the truth, and draw more closely those ties of Christian brotherhood, which ought to bind together in harmonious union the whole family of God. Earnestly praying, dear friends, that you, as a portion of this family, may be wisely directed, as regards your conduct towards your fellow-disciples who conscientiously differ from you, and may

always exhibit the proper spirit, thereby investing your characters with a halo of moral loveliness which all must admire, permit me to submit to your serious consideration the following hints :

1. *Take care always, when called to express a difference of opinion, that it be done with self-diffident modesty.* This is no proof that you are unsettled in your views. The greatest self-diffidence is perfectly compatible with the most enlightened, and firmly held sentiments. It merely proves that you do not regard yourselves, what indeed none upon earth are—as infallible. Truth and modesty are twin sisters. Self-confidence is a proof of self-ignorance, but is no evidence of truth. Whoever states his opinions, how much soever they may differ from those entertained and cherished by others, firmly, but modestly, precludes offence, paves the way for their candid consideration, and in the end, perhaps, joyful reception.

2. *Concede readily to others the privilege you claim for yourselves—that of judging for themselves.* You think they are in error on some points, but they have the very same right to think you are in error. In the exercise of the right of private judgment, you and they have come perhaps to different conclusions on the same subject. While, therefore, you may regret this want of unanimity, you are bound to honour the principle of independent thought which has led to it.

3. *Beware of exalting your peculiar views above others of greater importance on which there is a perfect agreement.* Men are naturally apt to forget their agreements in looking at their differences. This is to manifest more concern about the top-stone in the building, than either the chief corner-stone or the

foundation. Concern for the feet and inferior members of the body must not be suffered to absorb attention to the neglect of the head, the bosom, or the right arm. Let agreement, therefore, on the great leading points of the Christian faith, which must exist among all true Christians, always have its due weight. It affords a broad foundation for Christian love. Let not the people of God, bought with the blood of Christ, and sanctified by his Spirit, holding with equal firmness the doctrines of his incarnation, supreme divinity, atonement, justification by faith—partakers of the same hope, and ripening for the same heavenly inheritance, lose sight of, or forget, in their zeal for some minor peculiarities, that agreement by which they are all one in Christ Jesus.

4. *Never depreciate or appear to overlook the excellencies of brethren who differ from you.* These are sometimes both numerous, and very considerable. Are they zealous? Honour them for it. Are they generous? Commend them for it. Are they active? Let them have all due praise. Some professors of religion seem almost blind to every form of excellence beyond the precincts of their own party. Away with such sectarian meanness. Wherein others excel, strive ye to excel also; and let them have all due honour for what is truly honourable. No man can ever add to his own laurels, by attempting to undervalue or pluck those of another. True greatness of soul, while it refuses to flatter, is too magnanimous to hide or depreciate real excellence in whomsoever it appears.

5. *Be ever ready to co-operate with Christians holding different sentiments in every good work.* It is wonderful what happy effect such co-operation fre-

quently has. Working together, aiming at the same ends, and guided by similar motives, men naturally become assimilated in their habits, conformed in feeling, one in heart as well as in action. Thus their hearts become knit together in love. Besides, they get to know each other better, and this is of great consequence. Much of the alienation of heart among Christians, arises from ignorance of each other's feeling and character. Kept asunder through the influence of their respective prejudices, and looking at each other through the medium of sectarian distinctions, they are apt to entertain views of each other very different from what they find to have been true on more intimate acquaintance.

Opportunities for co-operating in this active and stirring age are abundant. One grand rallying point, around which all Protestants may meet, is that of the Bible Society. The circulation of God's word must be dear to every Christian heart. All appeal to the Bible in support of their opinions; and therefore its universal dissemination is to be desired by all. Let all, therefore, unite in this holy enterprise. Why may not Christians of different names overleap the barriers of party, and join hands and efforts in the great and glorious work of Christian missions? It requires no great amount of enlightenment to perceive, or charity to admit, that the Christianity, even of those from whom we differ most, must be infinitely superior to heathenism, and a great blessing to those who receive it; its extension, therefore, must be a good and holy work. Besides Bible and Missionary Societies, there are many schemes of general benevolence in which professing Christians of different sentiments may happily co-operate. Study, dear friends, to improve such opportunities. Be ye

foremost to join in all good works. By all means, if practicable, let such co-operation be sanctified by prayer. Get those who differ from you to work with you, and pray with you, and much is attained. This is the direct road to the heart; and the heart once captured, prejudice expelled, a pathway is opened to the understanding. Light will follow in the train of love.

Such, brethren, are a few suggestions I would submit for the regulation of your deportment towards those whose religious sentiments on some points differ from your own. Much more I might say, but it is not necessary. Put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness, and that will be enough. This is a fair robe in which the Christian character appears with peculiar and attractive lustre. Of course I do not mean that spurious charity which comprehends almost all, and sundries of every party, irrespective of character, within the pale of its catholic regards; but that charity which loves all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth. It is no evidence that a man is in error, that he is charitable, but quite the reverse. The nearer a man is to the truth, the more will he possess of this spirit. Where there is most light, there it is reasonable to suppose there will be most heat too. The most bigotted are invariably the most erroneous. Were professing Christians to demean themselves habitually towards those who differ from them in conformity with the principle of Bible charity, what blessed effects would follow! What a lovely aspect the Christian Church would present! Jarrings, animosities, strife, and jealousy, would soon come to an end; while love, peace, and union, would take their place. The dwellers in Zion would feast together and rejoice, and the banquet of their joys would be love.

The spiritual prosperity consequent on the prevalence of union and love among professing Christians, would be the prelude of the conversion of the world. One main obstacle, it is obvious, to the diffusion of "the truth as it is in Jesus," arises from diversity of sentiment, and alienation of heart among those who profess to love it. How frequently, in regard to this, has the adversary had cause to speak reproachfully. How often has the stream of Christian benevolence, as it was about to issue forth to irrigate and fertilize the spiritual wastes of a sinful world, been interrupted and hemmed in by the embankment of a sectarian selfishness, or divided by party spirit into little sectarian rills, which were soon in great measure absorbed in the moral quagmires of party strife. But, the divisions of the people of God once healed, love, harmony, and union, become everywhere triumphant; the Church would awake, put on her strength, and deck herself in her beautiful garments; the Gentiles would come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising; the inhabitants of the world would learn righteousness, and the prediction would be realized:—"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." The Lord hasten it in his time!

YOUR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

LETTER XI.

ON THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TOWARDS THEIR
UNCONVERTED RELATIVES.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

To be saved from the wrath to come, made a child of God, and an heir of glory, is of all mercies the greatest. We may justly speak of it in the language of the poet :

Love without end, and without measure, grace.

Who that has tasted such love, but must have experienced its power in opening the heart and calling forth its tenderest sympathies in benevolent aspirations to promote the glory of its author, and the everlasting good of man ! He who has been brought through grace to the enjoyment of the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, is anxious that all others should enjoy the same blessedness. Christianity repudiates all monopoly. Knowing that all fulness dwells in Christ, and feeling his own unutterable obligations to sovereign love, the Christian, as he looks upon the mass of mankind walking in the broad way to destruction, feels his bowels yearning over them, and is ready to exclaim—

How long to streams of false delight
Will ye in crowds repair ?

Come ye, come all to those living waters where I have found refreshment and delight to my soul.

In this vast company, however, there are some who have peculiar claims on his benevolent efforts. The condition of relatives, united to him by the ties of nature, but who may be still in an unconverted state, is fitted to awaken in his bosom the deepest solicitude, and call forth the most earnest, persevering, and prayerful efforts for their salvation.

The Word of God contains some most instructive instances of holy men seeking the spiritual good of their relatives. "Come thou with us," said Moses to Hobab, his father-in-law, "and we will do thee good; for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel." The concern of Joshua for the spiritual good of his family is manifest from his pious resolution—"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." No sooner was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, made acquainted with Christ, than we find him in search of his brother, that he might tell him what a dear Saviour he had found; and as the inspired record informs us, in brief, but instructive terms, "he brought him to Jesus." When Cornelius had sent for Peter, as admonished of God, and waited for his arrival, he had called together, as we are told, his "kinsfolk and near relatives," that they, as well as himself, might hear the word of God at the mouth of his servant. How strongly does Paul express his anxiety for the salvation of his countrymen: "I say the truth in Christ," says he, "I lie not, my own conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh." The meaning of this strong

language is, that such was the Apostle's anxiety to promote the salvation of his kinsmen according to the flesh, that he was willing to submit to even death itself, should such sacrifice in any way contribute to such an end, and be in accordance with the will of his Divine Master. The word, *accursed*, in regard to the meaning of which there is at first sight some difficulty, when properly examined, will be found to have the sense of *devoted to death*, like victims devoted to death in sacrifice. How deeply anxious then was the apostle about the salvation of those related to him by the ties of blood, when prepared to submit to such sacrifice in their behalf. Strong feeling, dear friends, as regards the salvation of the souls of our relatives, is assuredly both scriptural and natural in the case of all genuine Christians. Are we ourselves partakers of the highest blessings, and do we not earnestly desire to see those who are near and dear to us sharing in the same felicity? Have we tasted that the Lord is gracious? Has the burden of our guilt been removed? Have we been made to exult in the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free? What, therefore, can be more thrillingly binding than that we anxiously desire, and put forth every effort to effect the salvation of the souls of our relatives? Nothing surely can afford us more hallowed delight, than the thought of being instrumental, under God, of bringing those we tenderly love to participate in those blessings we ourselves so highly value, and consider essential to real happiness both here and hereafter.

In order to this, let me beseech you, dear brethren, that you speak faithfully, affectionately, and solemnly, to your relatives about the concerns of their souls. Employ on all occasions, as prudence may dictate,

argument, expostulation, entreaty. Let no feeling of delicacy come between you and your duty. Prompted by love, and guided by prudence, let your motto constantly be in every effort, *persevere, persevere*. Regulated by these principles, you will always be ready to seize on every opportunity for speaking "a word in season;" sometimes perhaps in the way of direct exhortation, admonition, or solemn remonstrance, at other times, in the shape of counsel or suggestions, and in other ways. One way in which you may be useful to their souls, is that of inviting them to go with you to the house of God, and using all your influence to bring them under the preaching of the word. At times an invitation to a prayer meeting, or the week-day evening lecture may be given with a good grace. We should be careful to put good books, as far as may be, into the hands of our relatives. Even a well-written tract may be the instrument of their conversion to God. I knew a lady who was in the habit of putting a few tracts into the pocket of her brother, who was an unconverted man, when he went from home, in the hope, that happening to feel them in his pocket, he might be induced to pull them out and read them in his leisure moments, and thereby get good to his soul. We may greatly benefit the souls of our relatives, when removed to a distance from them, by religious correspondence. A faithful, affectionate letter on the concerns of the immortal soul, is calculated to be exceedingly useful. The thoughts it contains are presented in a more permanent form. The hints suggested, and serious considerations pressed on the attention, are in a shape to be perused and re-perused. Besides, there is something in the very fact of a letter from an absent friend, to engage the sympathies and touch the heart.

Various other ways of promoting the salvation of the souls of our relatives will readily occur to the Christian mind. Let none of them be lost.

Ponder well, dear friends, the following motives to the discharge of this most important duty.

1. *The relationship of kindred, supplies frequently many opportunities for doing good to the souls of our relatives.* Relatives dwell often under the same roof, sit around the same table, are often in each others company. Opportunities are thus presented almost hourly for promoting each others spiritual good. These involve deep responsibility. What shall we think of that man's religion, who can hold the most intimate fellowship with his relatives, converse with them about any thing, or everything, but the "one thing needful;" who never in the whole tenor of his intercourse, drops a single hint tending to the benefit of their immortal souls? Let us study, brethren, to improve such opportunities. Let us remember we must answer unto God for the use of them.

2. *The intimate knowledge we possess of the character of our relatives, should stimulate us to habitual efforts for the salvation of their souls.* We know more than others of their besetting sins; we know their tempers better, their propensities, their habits. We have therefore an immense advantage over others in knowing how to deal with their consciences, and to bring divine truth before their minds. This ought, then, to be an inducement to us to use every effort to bring them to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

3. *Regard for the honour of our religious principles, ought to stimulate us to unremitting endeavours to promote the salvation of the souls of our relatives.* The apathy of some professing Christians as regards the

conversion of their kinsmen according to the flesh, is a virtual abnegation of Christianity. What can the infidel think of the conduct of not a few who can behold those near and dear to them by the ties of nature, who, according to their own professed principles, must be posting on to eternal misery, and yet apparently do nothing to rescue them from such imminent peril? "Ye hypocrites," he is apt to exclaim, "is this the benevolence of your religion? How can I believe in your sincerity, when you say there is a hell, and yet do nothing to save these from plunging into it?" Alas! that there should be too much reason for such bitter reproach.

4. *The closeness and tenderness of the ties which bind us to our relatives, ought to be a strong inducement to us to seek this eternal well-being.* Some have complained of the peculiar difficulty which they have felt in speaking to their relatives on the subject of religion. I do not question but the duty may become at times somewhat difficult and delicate, on account of the very closeness of the relation; but surely there are considerations more than sufficient to embue us with a holy fortitude, which shall enable us to surmount the difficulty. Let us reflect on the vast and solemn interests in jeopardy—the souls, the eternal welfare of our relatives. How dreadful the thought, that any united to us by the ties of nature, whose countenances we are daily in the habit of beholding, with whom we have been on terms of the most endearing fellowship, whom we can never forget, whom the very constitution of our physical being, while we continue to live, forbids us ever to cease to love—how horrifying the thought that any such should be eternally miserable, consigned to the region of everlasting woe, tormented for

ever, and that too, perhaps, through our fault, in that place where "their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched!" Oh! dreadful beyond expression, that any of our beloved relatives, who, it may be, hung upon the same breast, lay in the same lap, whom the same fond mother bore, the same indulgent father smiled upon, who gamboled in the same nursery, sat around the same fire, lived under the same roof, should become the companions of apostate spirits, be cut off for ever from every ray of hope, and condemned to dwell for ever, "where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Reader, to whom art thou related? Art thou a parent, and canst thou bear the thought of a beloved child being lost for ever? Art thou a mother, and can aught excite such solicitude in thine heart, as the salvation of the souls of thy beloved offspring? Art thou a father, and is anything of such importance in thine eyes, as the eternal welfare of thine own children? Christian parents, let the salvation of your offspring be your chief concern. While you have a son or a daughter, who are yet strangers to Christ, cease not to admonish them, expostulate with them, entreat them to flee from the wrath to come. Instruct them, pray for them, weep for them, never slacken your efforts for their conversion, till you have reason to believe they are partakers of the same blessed hope with yourselves, and preparing for the same heavenly inheritance. Reader, hast thou a brother or a sister still in an unconverted state? Couldst thou bear the thought of their dying in that condition? It would pierce thy heart with unutterable anguish! Considering the uncertainty of life, art thou not called then to labour habitually for their conversion? O, lose no oppor-

tunity of calling their attention to the things of eternity. To be instrumental, under God, in promoting the salvation of their souls, is to confer upon them a favour of unspeakable magnitude. Then it must be well with them, well for this life, and for that which is to come.

Great, dear friends, must be the comfort to your own minds arising from the discharge of this duty. If you are honoured of God to bring your relatives to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, and seeking their salvation in dependence on God, you cannot doubt of success; how consoling the thought of meeting them in glory. Departed relatives who sleep in Jesus shall meet to part no more, and the cup of their joys shall be full. Though called to part, it may be for a season, you shall meet again. Those countenances which grew pale in death you shall behold in glory, where the ties of earthly relationship shall be exchanged for an uninterrupted everlasting brotherhood in the skies.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

LETTER XII.

ON THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TOWARDS THEIR
NEIGHBOURS AND ACQUAINTANCES.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

IT is of much consequence, that the stream of Christian benevolence in the heart of the people of God be directed aright in its out-goings. Next, therefore, to our beloved relatives, our neighbours and acquaintances ought to share most deeply in our sympathies and benevolent efforts. They live around us. We frequently meet them in the ordinary walks of social intercourse. We have therefore many opportunities of speaking to them, conversing with them, and calling their attention to the things of God. Such occasions ought to be most sedulously improved. Immortal souls are in danger of eternal ruin, and these too the souls of men connected with ourselves by numberless associations; and shall we not, therefore, burn with zeal, and abound in holy efforts to effect their deliverance? The duty is obvious. The sole inquiry must therefore be, how may we best carry out our benevolent intentions towards them? How may we most effectually promote their spiritual good?

Permit me, dear friends, to observe, that in order to the proper discharge of our duty, *we must carry*

about with us an habitual sense of it. This will make us observant of seasonable occasions for speaking a word to our ungodly neighbours or acquaintances. I say *seasonable*, for Christianity is not obtrusive or unmannerly. Much harm may be done to the cause of true religion, by an unseasonable obtrusion of the subject on the attention of worldly men. A prejudice may be thereby created, which may resist the force of the strongest arguments, and require the labours of years to remove. But, let us watch for suitable occasions for bringing the concerns of the soul before the minds of the unconverted around us, and let us carefully embrace them. Violating no law of courtesy, removed as far from rudeness as pusillanimity, let us speak to them as occasion offers, frequently, affectionately, faithfully. Heavy must be our account at last, should a neighbour or acquaintance intimately known to us, and loved by us, and disposed to listen to us perhaps with some degree of respect, perish eternally through our neglect or unfaithfulness.

To specify, dear friends, the various ways in which we may be useful to the souls of those so circumstanced, would no doubt be tedious. A few observations, however, bearing upon the subject, will be found, I trust, profitable, and not inappropriate.

Much good may be sometimes affected by *direct faithful remonstrance, admonition, or exhortation*. A want of moral courage deters not a few from the discharge of this duty. Strange, that Christians should behold their neighbours rushing into hell, and yet be too faint-hearted to admonish them of their danger. Where is all their heaven-inspired benevolence in such a case? Suppose we saw a neighbour hastening on towards some frightful pre-

cipice or pit, would we not call out to him and apprise him of his danger? Why not manifest the same concern for the soul? A word wisely spoken, has often been the means, under God, of the salvation of a soul, and brought thereby a revenue of glory to the Divine name. Watch, brethren, for such seasonable occasions; embrace them as they occur; remonstrate, beseech, expostulate, exhort, as prudence may dictate, and you may expect, under God, delightful results.

By distributing tracts among our neighbours or acquaintances, we may be honoured of God to promote the salvation of their souls. These little messengers, containing the words of eternal life, have been blessed, in not a few instances, as the instrument of bringing sinners to God. I doubt not much good might be done, were those who have the means, to possess themselves of a small library for the purpose of lending to their careless neighbours, containing such works as "Baxter's Call to the Unconverted," "Aleine's Alarm," "James's Anxious Inquirer," and others of a similar character. This is a reading age; and, if the friends of Christ do not supply the proper works to be read, the devil will. In this way may those labour for the promotion of the cause of Christ, who do not consider themselves qualified to do so in words. There is, moreover, a peculiar interest attached to this kind of effort. It is to scatter seed by means more durable in its nature than words, which often die with the breath that uttered them. Divine truth contained in a tract or religious treatise, may benefit many who can never be reached by the living voice, and become the instrument of the conversion of precious souls, when the hand that first sowed the seed lies cold in the dust,

Another mode of doing good to the souls of our neighbours and acquaintances, is by *religious visits, especially in the time of sickness*. Visiting may be greatly abused, and often is. When permitted to afford an occasion for idle gossip, vituperation, or slander, it becomes a channel of mischief. But it may also give rise to the most pleasing effects. A Christian man, breathing the spirit of his Master, carrying about with him a savour of Divine things, may greatly benefit the souls of his neighbours by occasional visits, improving them, as prudence may direct for their soul's good, and the glory of God. Such visits are more especially opportune in the season of sickness. Hardened is that man, who would not hail at such a time the visit of a pious neighbour. In most cases, indeed, such visits are sure to be welcomed with thankfulness. The most careless are glad of them. Such an opportunity for promoting the cause of Christ ought to be carefully improved; and who can tell what happy results may follow the pious exhortation, the solemn remonstrance, the devout prayer, at such a time? Besides, it may be our last opportunity of saving "a soul from death;" the disease may terminate fatally. The neighbour, who so often met us in the walks of every-day life, may soon, through the destructive power of the malady under which he labours, sleep in the dust. Let us not then, fail to improve the occasion. Who knows but a timely visit and a word fitly spoken, may, under God, become the means of the salvation of that neighbour's immortal spirit? And is not this a holy ambition? What Christian would not desire to be so honoured? A gem may thus be won, even at the eleventh hour, to shine for ever in Emmanuel's crown.

No genuine Christian can view the condition of neighbours and acquaintances without Christ, and living in neglect of the means of grace, *without feeling an anxious desire that such should enjoy the privilege of a faithful ministry of the word.* Love to Christ, and love to their souls, will therefore prompt them to use the means within the compass of their power, in order to effect such an end. Instances might be given, not a few, of souls saved, by means of an invitation to the house of God. Reader, hast thou an ungodly neighbour living in neglect of the ordinances of divine worship? Hast thou ever invited him to go with thee, where thou hast got good to thine own soul, where the word preached has come home with power to thine own heart? Does conscience answer in the negative? Then do it now. Bring him with thee to the house of prayer. Precious stones, not a few, have been prepared by such efforts for the temple of the Lord; and blessed is the man who has been thus honoured to hew them out of the quarry of nature. But some professing Christians, it is to be feared, are sadly negligent in this respect. Knowing that their neighbours live without God, and without hope in the world, that they perhaps attend no place of worship, they can allow week after week, month after month, year after year, to pass away, without putting forth a single effort to bring them within the walls of some Christian sanctuary. What shall we say of such culpable supineness? How unlike the spirit of Him, who came to seek and to save that which was lost! The Christian ministry is crippled, through the indifference of professing Christians, in this matter. Those who preach the word, can preach to those only who come under the sound of their voice.

They cannot go after every "sheep going astray;" and the consequence is, that multitudes are allowed to wander on, no one caring for their souls. Christian brethren, awake to your duty. Courteously invite your acquaintances and neighbours to go with you, where you believe the Gospel is faithfully and affectionately preached. The results you cannot divine. Leave them with God. The obligation on you is clear. Love to your Saviour, regard for the honour of religion, and the eternal welfare of precious souls, all point to this as an important part of Christian usefulness. Cultivate it then, and rest in the assurance, your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

These are some of the ways, dear friends, in which you ought to labour in dependence on divine aid for the spiritual good of your neighbours and acquaintances. But in order to success, one thing is imperatively demanded—*consistency of Christian deportment*. Your neighbours have far better opportunities for observing your conduct than others; and the detection on their part of excessive worldliness in your character, unmortified pride or vanity in your hearts, irascibility in your tempers, a lack of spirituality in your lives—any marked defect in your profession, neutralize, if not altogether nullify, your moral influence. Example teaches more impressively than precept. What is seen, affects us more than what is heard. Vision has its lessons as well as language, and they are more plastic. The holy consistent professor is like a candle lighted up in a dark room, which shines upon all, but those who are nearest to it receive most of its light. Alas! how many professors are rendered altogether useless, as regards any efforts they may put forth for the spiritual benefit of

those around them, through their inconsistency. Whatever aspect their pious zeal may have in the eyes of some, it appears almost ludicrous to those who know them best. Is the charge of hypocrisy, so often affixed to the Christian name by ungodly men in such circumstances, to be wondered at? Would you, dear friends, be powerful for good, be consistent. Men may then despise your words, but they will not despise *you*. Credit will be given you for uprightness of intention. You will possess weight of character. The arm of your spiritual strength will be morally strong. Thus your neighbours and acquaintances, while they behold your good conversation in Christ, and benevolent efforts to promote their spiritual good, if not savingly converted to God, will be convinced at least that Christ is in you of a truth.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

YOUR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

LETTER XIII.

ON THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TOWARDS THEIR
OWN COUNTRYMEN.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,
WE all naturally love the land of our birth. Its name is enshrined in our inmost sympathies; its memory embalmed in our fondest recollections. The love of country has stimulated the ambition of the statesman and the warrior, given an impulse to the philanthropist, inspired the poet, and imparted a practical direction to the wisdom of the age. But few are the true patriots. Much that goes under the name of patriotism, is no other than ambition, pride, vain glory. Without, however, seeming to detract from the just praise of him, who bleeds in his country's righteous cause, or taxes his mental powers in framing wise laws for its governance, or spends his patrimony in schemes to promote its amelioration, I shall not err when I say, there is a kind of patriotism incomparably more pure, more generous, more illustrious and sublime. My most earnest wish is, brethren, that in this respect you should be patriots, true and practical lovers of your country. The kind of patriotism to which I refer, is that which develops itself in zealous, persevering, well-directed efforts, to promote the spiritual good of our countrymen.

No Christian man, can calmly look at the condition of the country we inhabit, without perceiving a wide field for the exercise of such zeal. What multitudes of our countrymen are living in gross ignorance of the way of salvation; toiling for the bread that perisheth, but neglecting the living bread which came down from heaven; cumbered about many things, but despising "the one thing needful;" concerned about anything or everything, but that which ought to constitute their great concern; they live strangers to true happiness, and die all altogether unacquainted with the only source of true comfort in the hour of death. With many the chief end of life would seem to be, to eat, drink, sleep, labour, and die. It has been ascertained, on good authority, that not much less than one-third of the population of our native land are in this deplorable state. Appalling thought! And is it so in England, highly favoured England, the land of so many gospel privileges, the seat of so much piety and enlightenment? Such is the case! Assuredly, a fact so deeply affecting, ought to engage the serious attention of professing Christians of all denominations. Have the people of God been alive to their duty in this matter? Have they displayed that zeal, active effort, prayerfulness, and liberality for the evangelization of their own country which they ought to have done? Few, I believe, will say so. What, then, is duty? This we are bound to consider. Our past neglect cancels no obligation, but rather augments our responsibility. Let a consideration, dear friends, of the spiritual condition of your countrymen, and the little which has been hitherto done for their enlightenment, stimulate you in dependence upon God to vastly greater efforts for

their salvation. Much remains to be done, and you may do much, if you take the proper course.

But perhaps you ask, what are we to do? Get, I answer, in the first place, your minds deeply imbued with a sense of the urgency of the case, and the feeling will soon find an appropriate channel for expressing itself. A full heart will soon find work for empty hands. There is a variety of ways adapted to the peculiar circumstances of Christians, by which they may express their patriotic zeal for the conversion of their countrymen. Reader, art thou endowed *with some degree of aptitude for communicating instruction to the young? Cultivate this sphere of action.* It is a delightful, it is an honourable one. This kind of effort may, and ought to be, greatly extended. How many of the youth of our land are growing up in gross ignorance of God and Divine things! What a field for the opening and establishment of Sunday Schools! These ignorant and ragged youths must be instructed in their duty to God, otherwise they will become a pest to society; and what is worse, their undying souls will be lost. Let it be remembered, that the future progress of the cause of Christ depends in no small degree on the proper discharge of our duty towards such. The Church of Christ looks to the rising generation for a supply of members, when those who now enjoy its fellowship shall have gone the way of all the earth; and if our youth are carefully instructed in the principles of God's word, we cannot doubt but by the Divine blessing, many of them may become a blessing to their country, and ornamental in the Church. In this department of labour self-denying and energetic Christians may effect great things.

Some have a gift for exhortation. Such a talent ought to be carefully employed. The state of multitudes of our countrymen, presents ample room for its exercise. In the streets and lanes of our cities and towns, are to be found hundreds and thousands who attend no place of worship. Is nothing to be done for such? Who shall say, an intelligent Christian oversteps the path of duty when he visits them in their own dwellings, expounds to them the word of God, presses upon them the duty of attending some place of worship, or collecting as many of them as he can in some neighbouring house, exhorts them to flee from the wrath to come, and unfolds to them “the way, the truth, and the life? If some such means are not employed, it is hard to see how the dark places of our country shall be ever evangelized. Were professing Christians fully alive to their duty in this respect, I am persuaded our places of worship would soon be crowded with attentive hearers of the word, and it would be said in our ears, “The place is too straight for me: give place to me that I may dwell.” Christians are apt to think the work devolves on the ministers of the word; and so it does, but not exclusively. The work is too great for them to overtake. If they are left single-handed and alone to break up the fallow ground, it must remain in that condition, still bearing briers and thorns; whereas, if aided in their efforts as they ought by the people of God, it cannot be doubted the soil would soon become productive, and bring forth, “some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.”

Home Missions have strong claims on the generous support of every lover of his country. The claims of such institutions have never yet been in my view so

fully admitted as they ought. Why is it so? Has not our own land more thrilling claims upon us than any other? Have not those who live under the same government with ourselves, enjoying the same civil rights, adding to our national resources and general wealth, our artizans, our mechanics, our miners, our labourers, the first and strongest claim on our Christian sympathies? The spiritual condition of our country, calls loudly for a large supply of home missionaries. The fields are white to harvest. But while the harvest truly is great, the labourers are few. Men of great mental power, strong principle, devoted piety, burning zeal, are required for this work. But who is to sustain them? This, dear friends, is your business. Liberal and munificent gifts are required at your hands. The work cannot be carried on without your vigorous co-operation. The spiritual darkness of our country is traceable, in a great measure, to the selfish supineness and niggardly spirit of many professing Christians. Throw your soul, brethren, into this work. Be patriots in this the highest and best sense. Greater love to your country you cannot possibly display, than that which consists in the prompt and generous support of home missions. It is righteousness which exalteth a nation, and never shall our beloved land be truly exalted, till the back streets, lanes, and alleys, of our crowded cities, have been evangelized, and the cottages of our peasantry universally blessed with the light of the Gospel.

The press is a mighty instrument of enlightenment, when properly worked, *and it is the duty of Christians to see to it, that it be energetically employed for the spiritual good of their own country.* This mighty power has been laid under contribution most vigor-

ously in the service of the devil. A perfect deluge of polluting and demoralizing publications have issued from it, to inundate, and ruin our beloved country. But can it not be worked for the very opposite effect? Unquestionably it can, and ought; and as I have just said, it is the duty of Christians to take care that it be so. In my view, the press ought to be worked by every Christian pastor as extensively as possible, as an auxiliary to the pulpit. There are topics he may handle in this way, which he could not so suitably discuss before the great congregation. There are great principles, moreover, which it is well for the people to contemplate in a more tangible form, than they possibly could from the recollection of public discourses; and the interest of pastoral connexion is likely to secure attention, on the part of the people, to what may emanate from the pen of their own pastors. But if ministers write and print, and publish, the people must buy and read. Aided by the generosity of their hearers, ministers may, in my judgment, employ the press with great and happy effect, furthering by timely addresses, pastoral letters, or practical treatises, the cause of Christ, adding to the effect of their public labours, and using an instrumentality tending to leaven the community with the principles of Christianity, where their voice cannot be heard.

Wealthy Christians have it in their power to do more good to their country, by means of the press, than they have ever yet thought of. By consecrating a portion of their property to the cheapening of useful religious books, publishing original works of an awakening character, at a price within the reach of the poorest; or, by a gratuitous circulation of such treatises among those they are likely to benefit, they

may confer immense advantage upon their country, not merely promote its social good, but save many souls, and advance the eternal welfare of multitudes, who are ready to perish for lack of knowledge.

I have thus, dear friends, indicated in brief, your obligation to seek the spiritual enlightenment of your country, and pointed out some ways in which you may express your sense of it. Now is the time for you to work. There is a post for every man. Would we had a man for every post! There is every thing to stimulate to effort in this holy enterprise. The very greatness of your country, in a social point of view, ought to have such effect. What land, in this view of it, like yours? Our country is the grand emporium of the world, the centre of activity and enterprise. The arts flourish in our midst, science is cultivated with zeal, discovery wears its laurels, invention is patronised, our literature is studied by scholars in every land, our language bids fair to become universal, our national resources are most extensive, our flag floats on every breeze, we have colonies in every part of the globe, and the sun never sets on the dominions of our illustrious sovereign. But with all this social greatness, which belongs to the land of our birth, how many dark spots disfigure its moral aspect. Millions of our countrymen are as destitute of a knowledge of the Gospel, as if they had been born in the heart of China. Vices of the most gigantic character are rampant in the midst of us. The Lord's day is profaned by thousands, and tens of thousands of our countrymen. Many never enter a place of worship. Multitudes are living as if there were no hereafter, no heaven, no hell. Surely such a state of things presents an ample sphere for the expan-

sive energy of the most glowing and exalted Christian patriotism. Be ye then, brethren, in the front ranks in this holy enterprise. Regard yourselves as specially charged with the high commission of evangelizing your country. It is a work worthy of your heavenly descent. Every soul converted through your instrumentality will be another added to the "washed and sanctified" upon earth, who, by their good works, glorify your Father who is in heaven—a monument to bespeak the love of your Redeemer, and a blessing to the land which gave you birth. Thus, if your name is not enrolled in the annals of fame upon earth, as the benefactors of your country, it will be written in heaven. God, your Saviour, in the great day will own you as his true and faithful servants, and you will not lose your reward.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

LETTER XIV.

ON MISSIONS TO THE HEATHEN.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

THE Divine Head of the Church has committed to his people the sublime and glorious work of the world's evangelization. In this field of effort, Christianity finds ample room for the full expansion of its sanctified benevolence, the people of God rise to the true dignity of their holy calling, and obtain an opportunity of testifying their sincere and unfeigned regard to the authority and command of their Divine Master. To be instrumental, therefore, under God, in spreading the knowledge of the truth, promoting the conversion of sinners, and the advancement of that kingdom which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost," is not merely their duty, but their honour and high privilege.

To deepen our interest in this great work, let us look for a moment at what has been done,—at what remains to be done,—and, at the considerations which ought to stimulate to increased zeal and energy in this sublimely benevolent enterprise.

The primitive age was the age of zeal and love; consequently of missionary effort. The Church then glowed in all the fervour of her first love. Love to

her Divine Head, and love to her work, became her prominent features. The primitive Christians looked upon the world in its true aspect, in a state of moral ruin, but having a provision made through Divine mercy for its salvation. They regarded themselves as entrusted by "the Author and Finisher of their faith," with the high commission of making known this provision to their heathen neighbours. Persecution only served to quicken their zeal, or at least to furnish more ample scope for its exercise. Accordingly, we find in the terms of the inspired narrative, that "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." The effects of such zeal were such as might have been expected. The truth triumphed, the word of the Lord had free course, and was glorified. Many became obedient to the faith. Unaided by popular prejudice, or the institutions of society, courting no secular favour, but contrariwise oppressed and persecuted, the inoffensive, but devoted Christians, continued to prosecute their efforts for the evangelization of the world, and God crowned their zeal with remarkable success.

But the primitive age passed away, and the warmth and devotedness which characterised it soon disappeared. The age of incipient corruption succeeded. An impure theology invaded the church. "The doctrines and commandments of men" began to displace the simplicity, fervour, and activity of the apostolic age. The papacy arose. Its proud pretensions were allowed. Men were now religious by proxy, handing over the concerns of religion to the priesthood, a class of functionaries, who arrogantly claimed the direction of all spiritual matters. No wonder the spirit of missions expired.

Whatever efforts were now put forth, were the effects of priestly ambition, attempts to subjugate mankind to the power of the Romish church, and extend the ghostly authority of the priesthood.

The Reformation forms a bright era in the annals of the Church. The truth as it is in Jesus, buried for ages under the rubbish of popish error and superstition, upheaved the superincumbent mass, and arose in its might to bless the world. The efforts of the reformers to spread the truths of the Gospel, were in a great measure, confined however to their own countries. There they had quite enough to do in battling against the votaries of Rome, and in making known the principles of the Gospel to their blinded countrymen. The resuscitation of the missionary spirit, is to be traced to more recent times. Its revival was owing, in a great measure, to the impulse given to the religious public, by the preaching of Whitfield and Wesley. The missionary spirit thus awakened, displayed itself in a short time in the shape of organizations or societies, instituted for the express object of diffusing the Gospel, both at home and abroad. The success attending the operations of these societies, it would be tedious to detail. Suffice it to say, that God has signally countenanced and blessed them. Missions, through their instrumentality, have been established in different parts of Europe, in Africa, in India, in China, in the South Sea Islands, in the West Indies, and in various other parts of our globe. In all these parts of the world, God has been pleased, in a greater or a lesser degree, to bless the labours of his servants. In the South Sea Islands the hand of the Lord has been signally manifest; and though He, whose ways are past finding out, has recently per-

mitted a dark cloud to shade the fair prospect which these isles afforded, he will, no doubt, yet arise and plead the cause that is his own, and pour confusion on the heads of his enemies. We anticipate a time (it may not be far distant), when these lovely islands, studding the bosom of the pacific-like stars, which gem the brow of night, shall appear in all the beauty of Gospel purity and peace. Not a few of Afric's sable sons, through the instrumentality of modern missions, have learned to bless the Lord our righteousness. Great good has been accomplished in India. Our missionaries tell us, that through the preaching of the word, the hoary systems of superstition in that wide empire, already begin to tremble, and must soon fall. China, long in a manner sealed against the introduction of the Gospel, is now open : and a small, but faithful band have girt up the loins of their minds, and gone in to possess the land, and God has blessed them.

Thus, the success that has already attended the missionary enterprise, is a sufficient proof of Divine approval. Many precious souls have been brought out of darkness into marvellous light—sinners saved, and God glorified.

Much has been done, for which, we thank God and take courage ; but it is but little, when compared with what remains to be done, and this ought to stimulate and augment our zeal and liberality. The first fruits, it is true, have been gathered in, but a great harvest remains to be reaped. The bright spots which the aspect of our world presents, are still but few. Look at Africa ; there a hundred millions of the human family are not only unevangelized, but sunk in the grossest barbarism. There demon-like passions rule in all their hideous malignity

—savage war, murder, rapine, with all the grosser vices of a barbarous state. India contains, at least, one hundred and twenty millions of idolaters. How frightful the thought! One hundred and twenty millions of idolaters! nearly six times the entire population of the British Isles. But teeming as India is with human beings, there is a vast idolatrous empire lying contiguous, still more populous. The population of China has been estimated at about three hundred and sixty millions. Of this vast population, it may be said with emphasis, that they are living without God and without hope in the world. If, not iron-bound by their prejudices, if not such superstitious devotees as their Hindoo neighbours, they are fearfully apathetic on the subject of religion, indolent, sensual, vicious.

Other parts of the world to which we might indeed look, present the same dark features. The number of Mahomedans, the followers of the false prophet of Mecca, are calculated, if I mistake not, above a hundred millions; and the adherents of the papal apostacy are reckoned about one hundred and twenty millions. If we add to these the number of nominal Protestants, which is not small, it must fearfully swell the amount of ungodliness. Alas! how sad the spectacle of millions posting on to eternity in darkness and unbelief.

Such, dear brethren, is the world. Darkness covers the earth—gross darkness the people. The devout emotions of the human heart, instead of being consecrated to the living and true God, are blasted in the atmosphere of superstition, and wasted in the service of dumb idols. Man endowed with the noble faculty of knowing and serving the God that made him, has prostituted the noblest gift of his Divine

goodness, trampled on his honour, and insulted the majesty of his throne. The temple He had erected for the manifestation of his own glory, has been sacrilegiously converted to the service of gods of wood and stone, the workmanship of human hands; its courts filled with the smoke of profane sacrifices, its altars broken down, and its portals profaned by the intrusion of demons and dumb idols. Voices, which should have mingled in holy concert in praising the one everlasting and adorable Jehovah, swell the shout of frantic and idolatrous devotion before the car of some false god; hearts, which ought to have risen in pure emotions of wonder, love, and adoration, to the throne of the Eternal, luxuriate in the impure rites, the pestilent and immoral worship of idolatrous heathenism, understandings which ought to have been illumined with the light of Divine truth, are full of darkness — the darkness of idolatry. Men professing themselves to be wise have become fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

In what manner must He who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, look upon such a world? We need not wait to speculate on the principles of his moral procedure in dealing with the heathen. That he will judge them is certain, and the Judge of all the earth cannot do but what is right. He will not, it is true, judge them on the same principle as us; but judge them he will. "As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law." "The wicked," no matter what they are, what privileges they may have enjoyed, or not enjoyed, "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all nations that forget God."

Brethren, a solemn duty devolves on us in reference to the heathen, and those who know not God and believe not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are bound to send them the Gospel by the strongest obligation. This obligation should be recognised devoutly, wisely, practically. Our efforts to extend the knowledge of Christ, ought to be begun with prayer, and prosecuted with prayer. All success is dependent on God. We ought also to combine our efforts. This is wisdom. The union of forces creates power. The isolated ray scarcely suffices to make the darkness visible, but the union of rays in the sunbeam illumines the world. Our benevolence must be practical. Practice in this matter is the grand proof of principle. We cannot all go forth to preach the Gospel to the heathen, nor can we all become public preachers of the word at home; but we can all contribute of our substance as the Lord has prospered us for the support of those who do so. Let us do what we can and God will bless us. Work then, brethren, while it is to-day. The night cometh wherein no man can work.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

LETTER XV.

ON PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

THE thought that we must all die, is awfully solemn. The hour of dissolution in the case of every one is fast approaching, and insensate must that man be regarded, who can think of it with indifference. But it is not merely the thought of death, the strugglings of the departing spirit, the dread aspect of the King of terrors, the agony of the last conflict, circumstances in themselves unutterably solemn, which ought to fill us with most concern, but the truthful and weighty announcement of Scripture, "It is appointed unto men once to die, *but after this the judgment.*" Death fixes our condition for judgment, and judgment for eternity. Preparation, therefore, for such event, is of the utmost consequence to every man. Without it, life is a lost adventure—the introduction to eternal misery; with it, the end of life is gained, no matter how soon we may be called hence, our souls are safe, and everlasting glory secured.

What then, you ask, is the preparation requisite? The idea, of course, of anything meritorious in the life, we utterly repudiate. Our fitness for death is not of merit, but of grace. In us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing. The grand prepara-

tion for this solemn event, is that which consists in union to Christ, an interest in his atoning work—“The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all, them that believe.” Death without Christ, is of all events, the most awful and appalling; but leaning on His Almighty arm, justified by his merits, accepted in his name, and cheered by his love, you shall pass the gloomy stream in triumph, and shout even in the midst thereof—“O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!”

To aid you, my dear friends, in preparing for a happy death, let me suggest to your serious consideration, the following things:—

1. *Strive to possess clear and scriptural views of the work of Christ.* Dark and confused views of the scheme of our salvation, is bad preparation for a death-bed. The reason why so many seem overwhelmed in that solemn hour with despondency and dismay, may frequently be traced to this source. Looking too much at themselves, and too little at Christ, their hope is beclouded when it ought to shine brightest. They shudder on the brink of Jordan, when they ought to shout, because the eye of their faith has not been singly directed to Him who died, “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death.” Clear views of the Gospel are indispensable to a comfortable death. Beware, dear brethren, of permitting any latent principle of self-righteousness to lurk in your bosoms. Renounce yourselves. Cling to the cross. Let nothing divert the eye of your faith from Christ. In Him you have all you need. Let the language of your heart in life be none but Christ, none but Christ; and in death, you shall speak the honours of His name, and

be more than conquerors through Him that loved you.

2. *Think much of death.* Keep up in your minds the habitual recollection, that you must soon go hence. The young and volatile are apt to shut out from their minds the thought of death; but this, far from retarding the approach of it, only renders it doubly terrific when it comes. The frequent contemplation of death, will tend to keep the mind in a grave, sober frame, excluding vain and frivolous thoughts, preserving the spirit from being swallowed up amid the cares of the world, and inducing that habit of holy watchfulness, which tends to preserve from those sinful indulgences, which darken our prospects for eternity, and bring guilt on the conscience. "Oh, that they were wise," said Moses, "that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Again:—"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Would you, then, dear friends, meet "the last enemy" without overwhelming dismay, familiarise your minds with the thought of his approach. Keep the eye of your mind fixed on the last struggle—dissolution, and the grave. Die you must, and that soon. "The dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." This corporeal frame must soon moulder in the dust. Carry about with you, brethren, this solemn consideration. When the summons of death arrives, you will thus be saved from surprise; your minds will be in a sense prepared for it, your mental energies braced for the final and solemn scene.

3. *Strive to possess an abiding sense of the unsatisfying character of all earthly enjoyments.* The love

of the world makes dying hard work to many. Death is no other, than the tearing of the worldly man from his idols. But what is there in this world to bind the heart to it? Can the world satisfy the desires of the immortal spirit? Can its wealth, its silver, and its gold, its honours, and its possessions, "the pomp and circumstance of life," afford real enjoyment, prepare for the undying soul a paradise of substantial delights? Assuredly not. Solomon made the experiment, and we have the record of his experience—"Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Why then do men shudder at the thought of quitting this vain scene? Why recoil at the aspect of the messenger, who calls them away from its frivolous and unsatisfying pursuits? Meditate, brethren, frequently and steadily on the vanity and unsatisfying nature of the things of the world; and thus, when the messenger of death shall summon you hence, you will so far be prepared to quit this mortal scene, without that reluctant horror which so frequently characterises the departure of worldly men.

4. *Be active in the service of God, while you enjoy health and strength.* This is true preparation for death. "God," says an old divine, "is our God, when we die, if we be his servants while we live." How distracting and painful the thought upon a death-bed, of duties neglected, things left undone which might have been done, opportunities of advancing the divine glory misimproved, a life spent more in serving ourselves than God. The useful Christian, has the comfort of thinking he goes at death to his reward, while his labours may tell with happy effect, on generations yet unborn. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth :

yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

5. *As a further preparation for death, let me exhort you to acquaint yourselves well with the exceeding great and precious promises of the divine word, bearing on support in that solemn hour.* "Precious, in the sight of the Lord, is the death of his saints." "Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death. "He will swallow up death in victory." "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." "I am persuaded," says Paul, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Such promises, are signally fitted to cheer the heart in the prospect of dissolution. Assured of victory, we can look forward to the last conflict without misgiving or dismay. Knowing that, supported by the arm of our Almighty Saviour, we shall cross the Jordan of death in safety, we can look upon the gloomy stream, without agitation or horror.

Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood,
Can fright us from the shore.

Brethren, your Saviour is a loving and faithful Saviour. He will never leave you, nor forsake you. He who has been with you in life, will not forsake you in death. You cannot doubt his love, his

power, his faithfulness. You have had many proofs of them all. Will he, then, who has enabled you to overcome in life, leave you to be vanquished by the last enemy? Harbour not the suspicion. You shall triumph. Be assured of that. Christ can make the victory easy. The scene, though gloomy in prospect, He can irradiate.

Jesus can make a dying bed
 Feel soft as downy pillows are;
 While on his breast I lean my head,
 And breathe my life out sweetly there.

All the promises of God are in Christ; yea, and in him, Amen, unto the glory of God; and a consideration of their freeness, richness, variety, and exuberant fulness, is one of the most effectual ways of preparing the minds of the people of God for the solemnities of dissolution. Mark them well, then, and may God bless them for your comfort and joy!

6. *Finally, that you may be prepared for death, contemplate habitually the prospect that awaits you beyond the grave.* Christ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel. There is no death in heaven. "We know," says the apostle Paul, "that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be, that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." Bright prospect! glorious anticipation!

Why should we start and fear to die ?
What timorous worms we mortals are !
Death is the gate of endless joy,
And yet we dread to enter there.

The body which has been conveyed to the tomb, shall yet be quickened and raised again; and the re-united spirit, in conjunction with its former companion, participate in the delights and joys of an endless felicity. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory."

YOUR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

LETTER XVI.

 ON THE HEAVENLY STATE—ITS CHARACTER
 AND ENJOYMENTS.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

THOUGH I had occasion in my last letter to call your attention to the delightful prospect, which awaits the Christian beyond the grave, as calculated to sustain his mind in the view of death, I think it not inappropriate to the close of my little work, to direct your thoughts somewhat more fully to the contemplation of this glorious theme. The Christian, though a stranger and a pilgrim here, is journeying forward to an everlasting home. There is a fair mansion in the skies prepared for the people of God. By no hostile power, can a child of God be excluded from that happy place. It is kept for the people of God, and they for it, through the power of the Almighty. Look up then, Christian, amid your trials; look up to the heaven that awaits you. Let the world frown upon you if it will; heaven is yours, and that should satisfy you. Here you may be called to weep; but there you shall sing—

Then let your songs abound,
 And every tear be dry;
 You're marching through Emmanuel's ground
 To fairer worlds on high.

In our present state, we are unable to form adequate conceptions of the bliss of heaven. It must be tasted and enjoyed, to be fully known. But imperfect as our knowledge of it must of necessity be, it is ample enough to afford a theme of delightful contemplation, an incentive to duty, and a source of heart-inspiring joy in the season of depression or distress. We find in the word of God, the most select images grouped together, to give us the most striking and lively representation of its glory. The street of the city is of pure gold, the gates pearls, the foundations of the wall garnished with all manner of precious stones; there is no night there, and the city has no need of the sun nor the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

One grand characteristic of heavenly felicity, is the total absence of everything which might form an occasion of sorrow. In this respect it exhibits a perfect contrast to the present life, in which light and shade, joy and grief, so frequently alternate and prevail. In heaven, there will be nothing to pain or distress. There will be no sighs there, for sorrow and sighing shall have for ever fled away; there will be no tears there, for God the Lord shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; there will be no partings there—

But death-divided, friends at last
Shall meet to part no more.

No cloud of grief shall ever bedim its radiant sky; no shade of misery co-mingle with the brightness of its everlasting sunshine. Death, the destroyer of domestic felicity, the disrupter of the tenderest ties, the last enemy, shall be unknown there; but they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament,

and they that have turned many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.

Pass, dear friends, to a consideration of the positive elements of the happiness of heaven, and what sublime themes of contemplation present themselves.

1. *Heaven will be a scene of unsullied purity.* Nothing can enter that defileth or maketh a lie. An impure spirit could not breathe the atmosphere of heaven. The redeemed are represented as clothed in white robes which denote their purity. Oh! happy region, where sin is unknown.

2. *Heaven will be a theatre for holy activity.* Action is the proper element of the human spirit. The bliss of heaven will not consist in luxurious indolence, or a kind of mystic repose, but afford the most ample scope for the exercise of all the energies of glorified humanity.

The precise character of heavenly employments we cannot well define, but no small part we know will consist of praise. The ransomed spirit, privileged no doubt to range amid the works of the Most High, will find no unwelcome service in laying its tribute of adoration at the foot of the eternal throne. But the wonders of redeeming love, will supply the loftiest theme of praise. The redeemed will sing for ever the new song of Moses and the Lamb. This theme will be exhaustless. New wonders, as they sing, will constantly rise to view, and thus they will strike their harps to higher and still higher notes.

Worthy the Lamb that once was slain,
To be exalted thus;
Worthy the Lamb, let us reply,
For he was slain for us!

3. *Heaven will be a scene of hallowed, and uninterrupted fellowship.* Think, brethren, of the com-

pany of heaven. All the saints of God will be there—patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and all holy men. Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and Samuel, and David, with the Old Testament saints, holy Paul, zealous Peter, and the seraphic John—all will be there. Nor will the most obscure saint on earth be absent. Many of little note here, but known to Christ, and precious in his sight, will be found in that happy assembly. Christian pastors, with the pious of their flocks, and relatives who died in the Lord, will be there—all met to part no more. Oh, what blissful society! Are we meetening, my dear, friends, for that happy company in the skies? Surely such a prospect ought to wean our affections from earth, and fix our desires on the everlasting abodes.

4. *But the crowning element of heavenly bliss, will be that of the beatific vision of Christ.* This as much transcends in glory every other item of celestial enjoyment, as the sun in the full blaze of his meridian splendour, the most luminous star. In heaven, the redeemed shall see him as he is. Now, we see through a glass darkly, but then, face to face.

How enrapturing the delight of beholding with unveiled face our exalted Redeemer, wearing in his glorified humanity the memorials of his conflict, and the emblems of his victory. Then, brethren, shall we sing, should it be your mercy and mine to obtain this beatific vision, with a rapture and delight of which we cannot now form a conception—

The head that once was crowned with thorns ;
Is crowned with glory now,
A royal diadem adorns
The mighty victor's brow.

Furthermore, let us keep in mind, that *the bliss of*

heaven will be permanent. This, indeed, is essential to the idea of true happiness. Tell me, that I shall be happy for millions of years, and then cease to be so, and you only proclaim my misery. But give me the well-grounded assurance, that I shall be happy for ever; that the cup of my enjoyment shall never be exhausted, and my heart and understanding both unite in allowing this to be genuine felicity. And such is the bliss of the righteous—everlasting. There is a volume of meaning in that word. Thy bliss, O Christian, shall never be exhausted. Think of that. When years, as numerous as there are sands in this globe, we inhabit, or drops of water in the mighty ocean, shall have passed away, the cup of thy joys will be nothing diminished.

Such, my dear friends, is the Christian's prospect. How elevating, how enrapturing, how glorious! Christian brethren, you may have to tread whilst here a thorny path, but it is the pathway to bliss, and conducts to glory :

There everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers.

Here you must pass through a vale of tears, but you are journeying forward to a scene of unalloyed delights, where there is fulness of joy, where there are pleasures for evermore. You cannot, must not, whilst sojourning here below, expect to enjoy always a cloudless sky; disappointment, and sorrow, and death, throw at times a saddening shade over the Christian's brightest earthly prospects; but there are fair abodes prepared for you, a crown of glory of dimless splendour for every child of God, an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Though pilgrims here, you are

destined hereafter to be kings and priests unto God. Bless the Lord, O my brethren, for this unrapturing prospect. Keep it habitually in view. Look upwards in every depressing scene, and anticipate that glorious morn, when having quitted for ever the duties and trials of earth, you shall enter into the joy of your Lord.

How sweet the prospect is !
It cheers the pilgrim's breast ;
We're journeying through the wilderness,
But soon shall gain our rest.
Hallelujah !
We are on our way to God.

May it be our mercy, beloved brethren, to meet in glory, to part no more. The Lord grant it. Amen.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

